MARVEL COMICS
PART SEVEN OF SEVEN
COSMOS IN COLLISION
QUASAR
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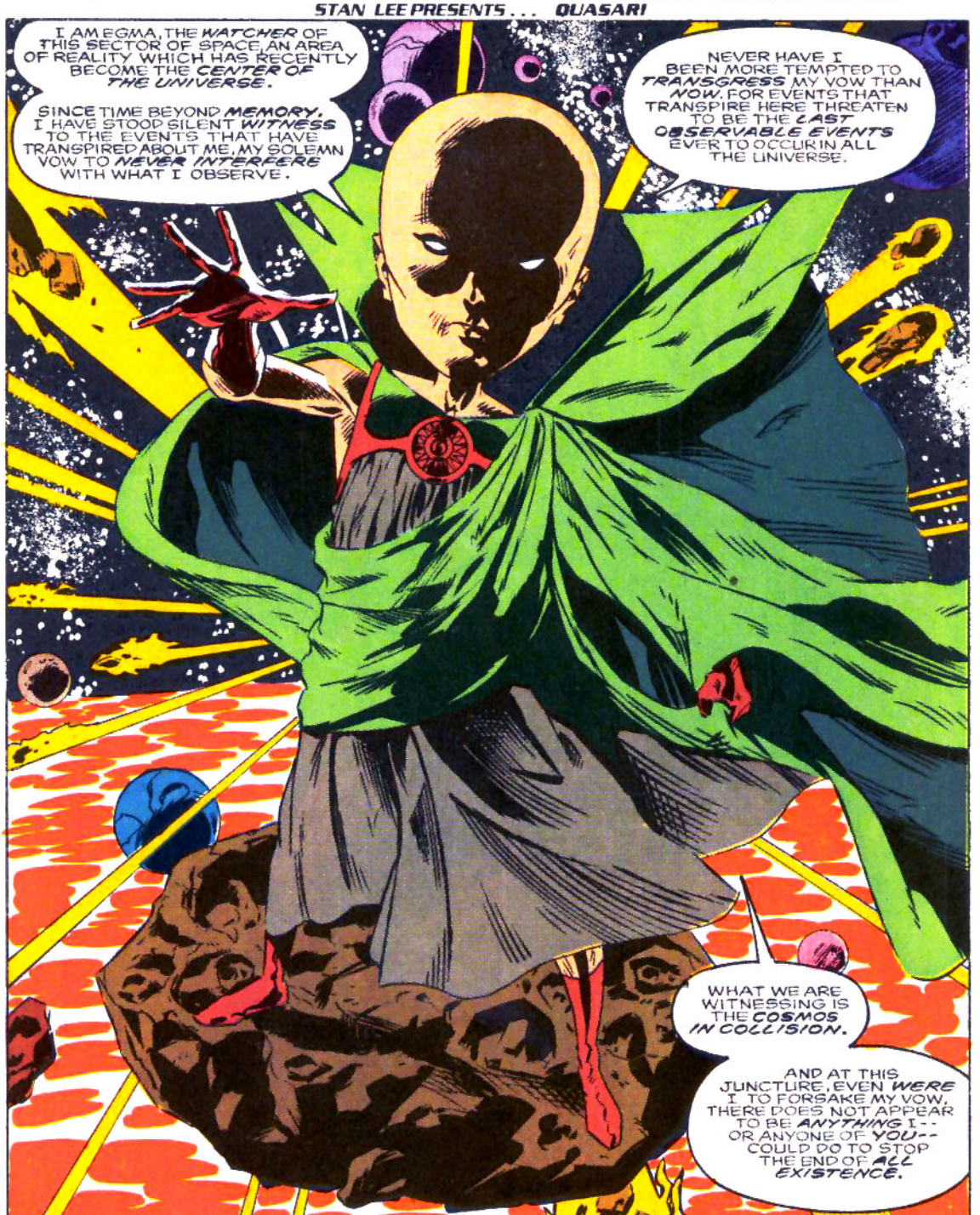
THIS IS IT: THE FINAL BATTLE!
IF QUASAR SHOULD FALL, THE UNIVERSE ITSELF DIES!
50 YEARS OF CAPTAIN AMERICA
1941 – 1991

WENDELL VAUGHN . . . THE FIRST EARTH MAN EVER APPOINTED PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE. BONDED TO THE ENERGY-TRANSFORMING QUANTUM-BANDS THAT ARE BOTH WEAPONS AND SYMBOLS OF HIS STATION, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE TO DEFEND ALL LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE FROM COSMIC EVIL!

STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . QUASAR!


I AM EGMA, THE WATCHER OF THIS SECTOR OF SPACE, AN AREA OF REALITY WHICH HAS RECENTLY BECOME THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.
SINCE TIME BEYOND MEMORY, I HAVE STOOD SILENT WITNESS TO THE EVENTS THAT HAVE TRANSPIRED ABOUT ME, MY SOLEMN VOW TO NEVER INTERFERE WITH WHAT I OBSERVE.
NEVER HAVE I BEEN MORE TEMPTED TO TRANSGRESS MY VOW THAN NOW, FOR EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRE HERE THREATEN TO BE THE LAST OBSERVABLE EVENTS EVER TO OCCUR IN ALL THE UNIVERSE.
WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING IS THE COSMOS IN COLLISION.
AND AT THIS JUNCTURE, EVEN WERE I TO FORSAKE MY VOW, THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ANYTHING I-- OR ANYONE OF YOU-- COULD DO TO STOP THE END OF ALL EXISTENCE.

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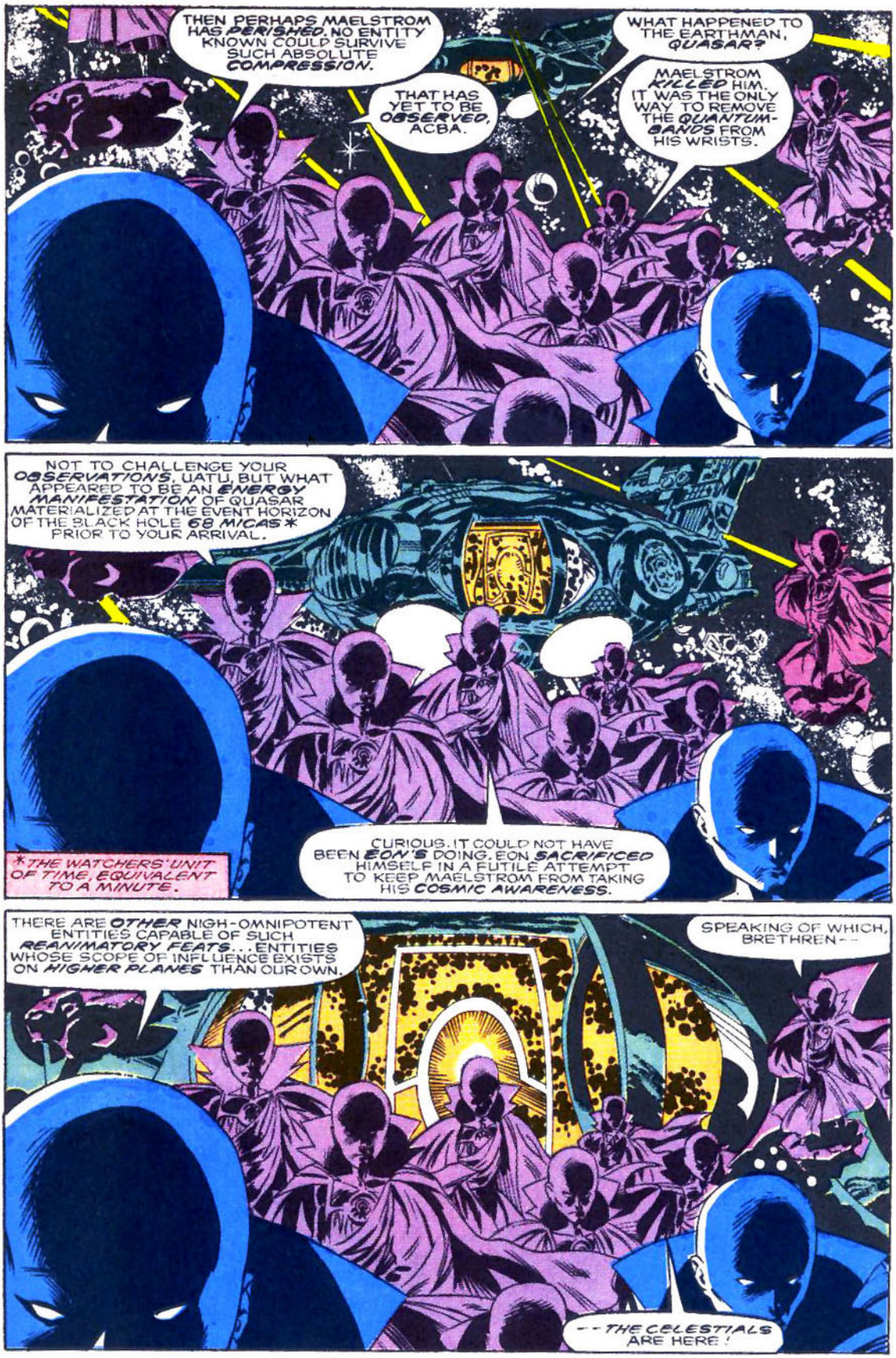
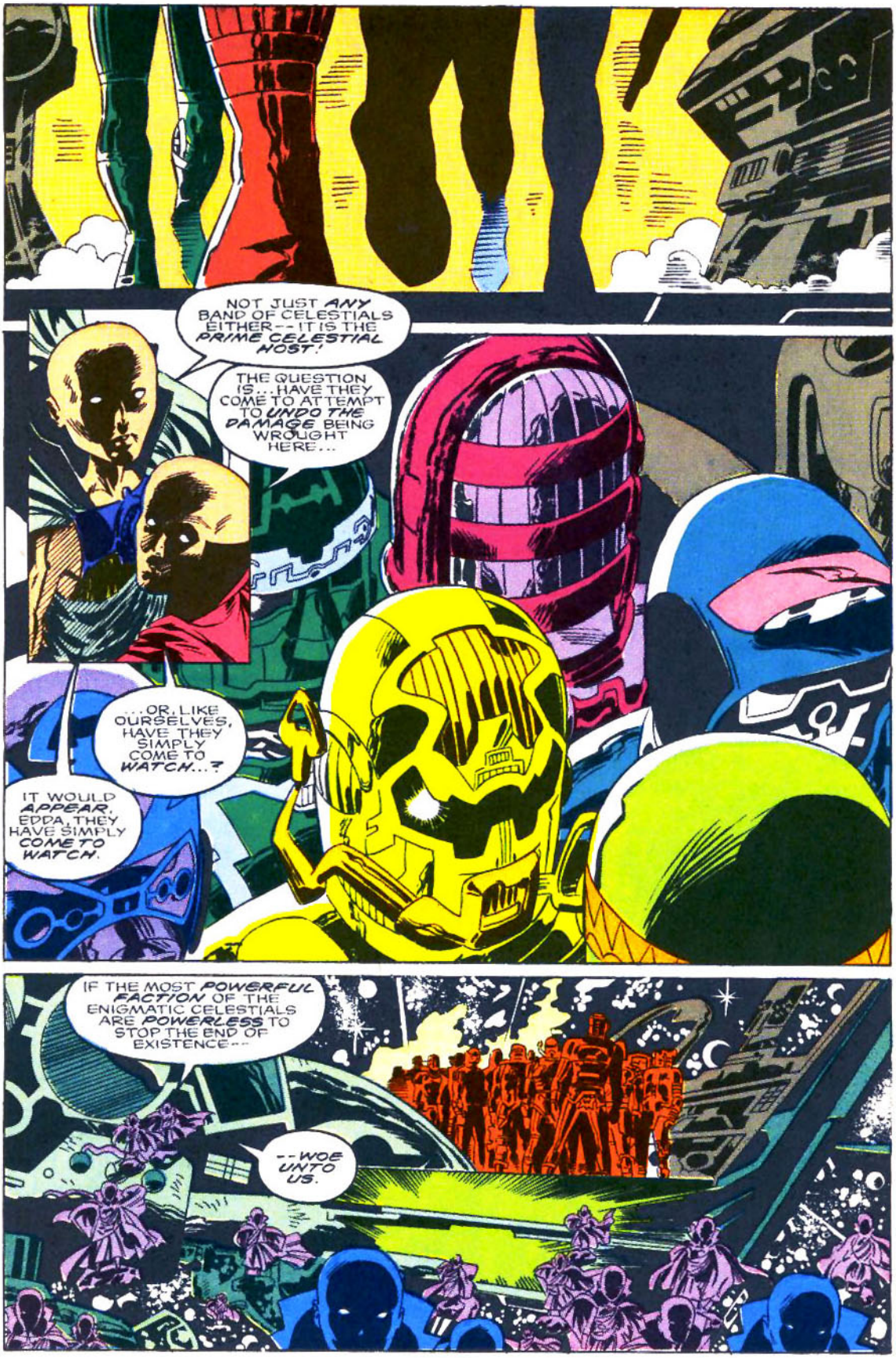
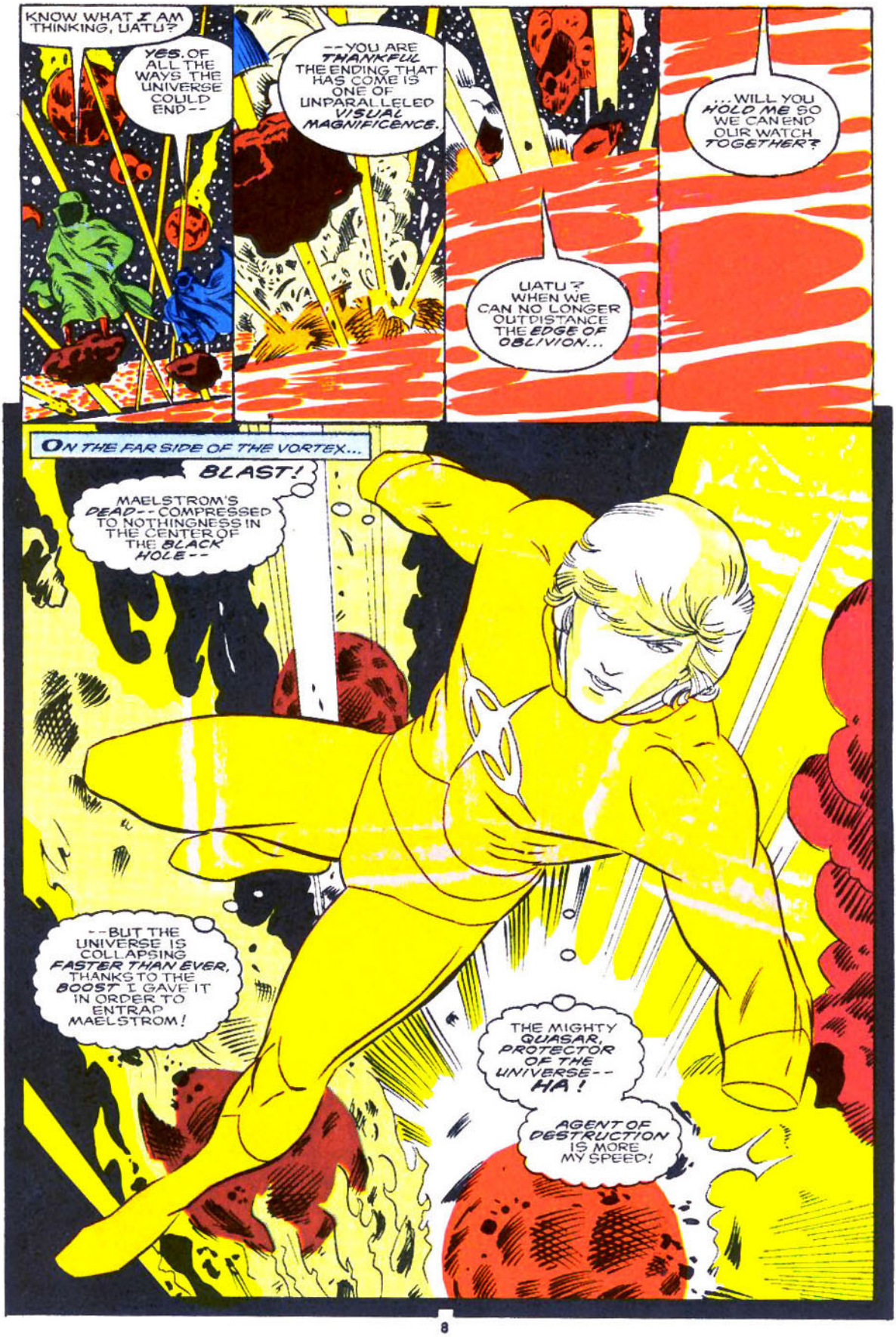
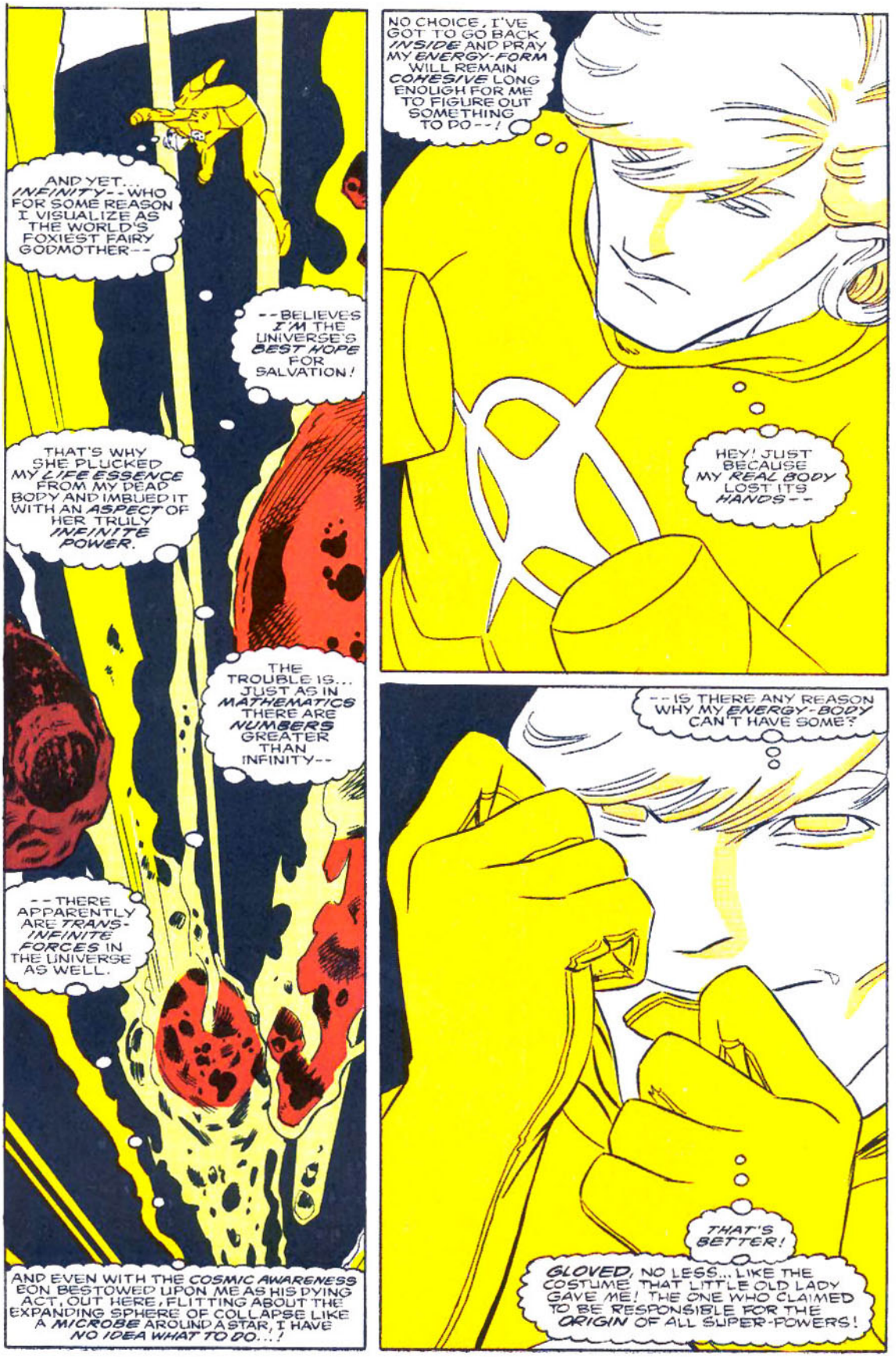
BEHOLD, MY BRETHREN, THE BLACK HOLE AT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE BY MY CALCULATIONS, IT IS NOW THE SIZE OF GALAXY 71867...
...AND IT IS EXPANDING SO RAPIDLY WE MUST ACCELERATE FROM IT AT .89 LIGHT SPEED IN ORDER TO KEEP A CONSTANT DISTANCE FROM ITS EVENT HORIZON.
WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THIS UNPRECEDENTED CATASTROPHE, EGMA?
A BEING NAMED MAELSTROM FROM A PLANET CALLED EARTH IN SECTOR W7596310.
YES, MY SECTOR OF SPACE.
WHO IS HE, UATU? HOW DID HE COME BY SUCH POWER AS TO COALESCE SUFFICIENT DARK MATTER IN ONE LOCALITY TO CAUSE THIS SPATIAL COLLAPSE?
ALL.. OR NOTHING

MAELSTROM IS A HYBRID OF TWO OF EARTH'S MOST POWERFUL SUB-SPECIES, ENDOWED WITH THE POWER TO CONTROL KINETIC ENERGY. IN A MISHAP, HIS PHYSICAL FORM WAS HYPEREXPANDED...
...AND HE GAINED FURTHER POWER BY SLAYING THE ABSTRACT BEING ANOMALY, STEALING THE ENERGY-HARNESSING QUANTUM-BANDS OF QUASAR--
THE EARTH HERO WHO SAVED US FROM THE OBLIVION PLAGUE!
THE SAME. AND FINALLY, MAELSTROM SEIZED THE SECRET OF COSMIC AWARENESS FROM QUASAR'S MENTOR, EON THE TIME BEING.
WHERE IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS EVIL NOW, EGMA?
HE HAS DISAPPEARED INTO THE VORTEX BEFORE US. AND WHAT TRANSPIRES WITHIN THE ULTIMATE VOID IS BEYOND EVEN OUR POWERS OF OBSERVATION.

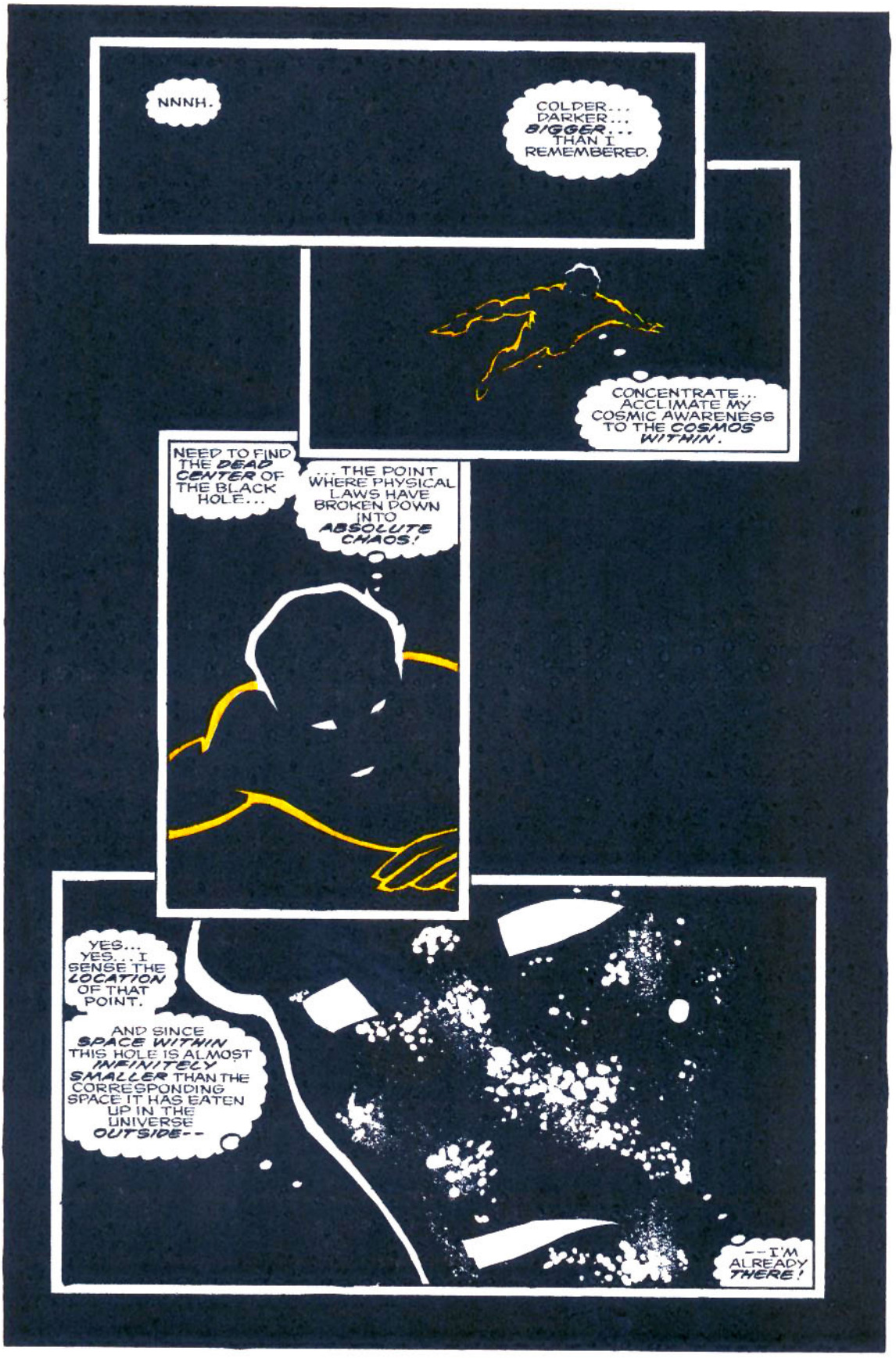

THEN PERHAPS MAELSTROM HAS PERISHED. NO ENTITY KNOWN COULD SURVIVE SUCH ABSOLUTE COMPRESSION.
THAT HAS YET TO BE OBSERVED, ACBA.
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EARTHMAN, QUASAR?
MAELSTROM KILLED HIM. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO REMOVE THE QUANTUM-BANDS FROM HIS WRISTS.
NOT TO CHALLENGE YOUR OBSERVATIONS, UATU, BUT WHAT APPEARED TO BE AN ENERGY MANIFESTATION OF QUASAR MATERIALIZED AT THE EVENT HORIZON OF THE BLACK HOLE 68 MICAS* PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL.
*THE WATCHERS' UNIT OF TIME, EQUIVALENT TO A MINUTE.
CURIOUS. IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN EON'S DOING. EON SACRIFICED HIMSELF IN A FUTILE ATTEMPT TO KEEP MAELSTROM FROM TAKING HIS COSMIC AWARENESS.
THERE ARE OTHER NIGH-OMNIPOTENT ENTITIES CAPABLE OF SUCH REANIMATORY FEATS... ENTITIES WHOSE SCOPE OF INFLUENCE EXISTS ON HIGHER PLANES THAN OUR OWN.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, BRETHREN--
--THE CELESTIALS ARE HERE!

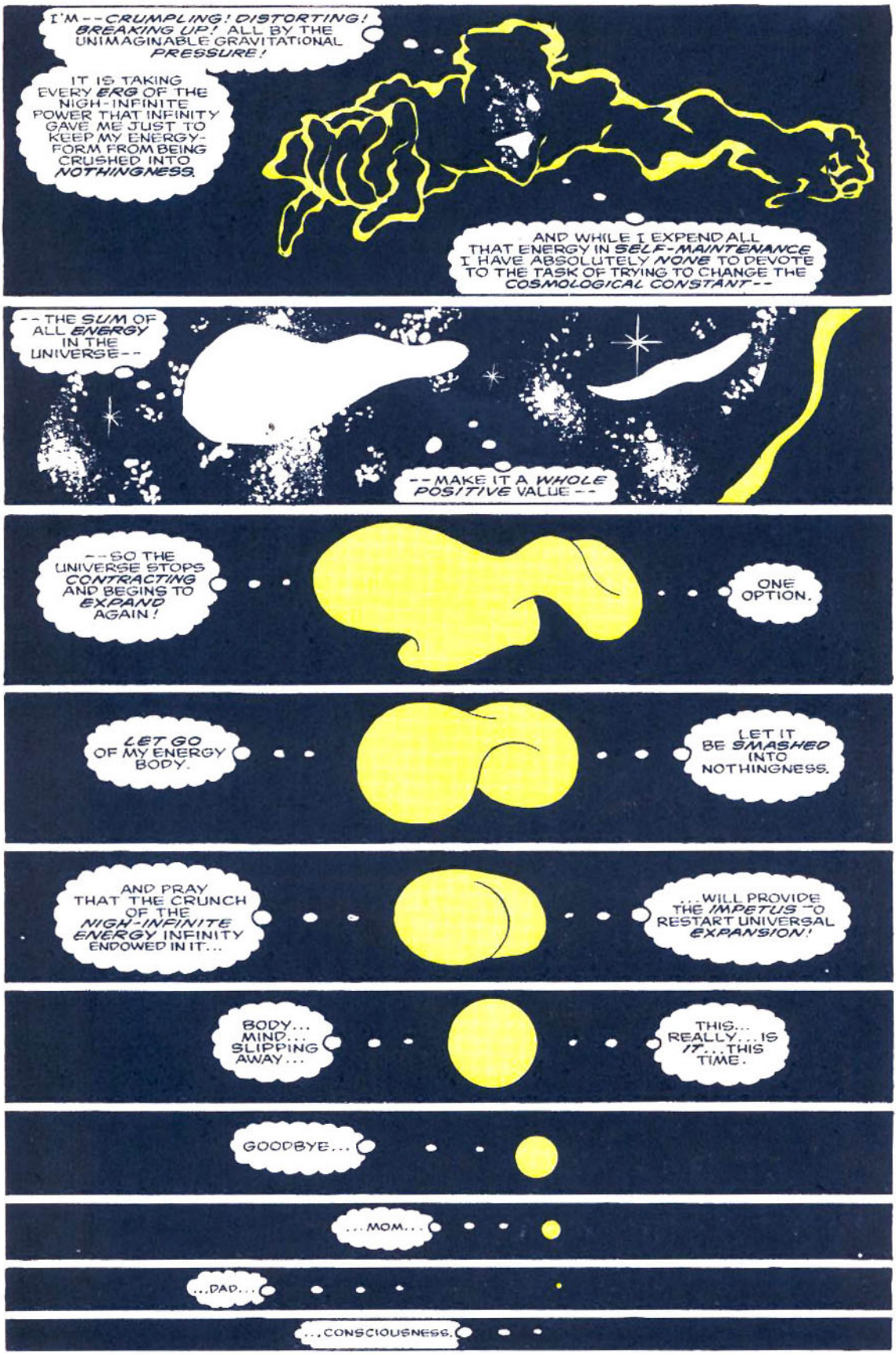

NOT JUST ANY BAND OF CELESTIALS EITHER--IT IS THE PRIME CELESTIAL HOST!
THE QUESTION IS...HAVE THEY COME TO ATTEMPT TO UNDO THE DAMAGE BEING WROUGHT HERE...
...OR, LIKE OURSELVES, HAVE THEY SIMPLY COME TO WATCH...?
IT WOULD APPEAR, EDDA, THEY HAVE SIMPLY COME TO WATCH.
IF THE MOST POWERFUL FACTION OF THE ENIGMATIC CELESTIALS ARE POWERLESS TO STOP THE END OF EXISTENCE--
--WOE UNTO US.

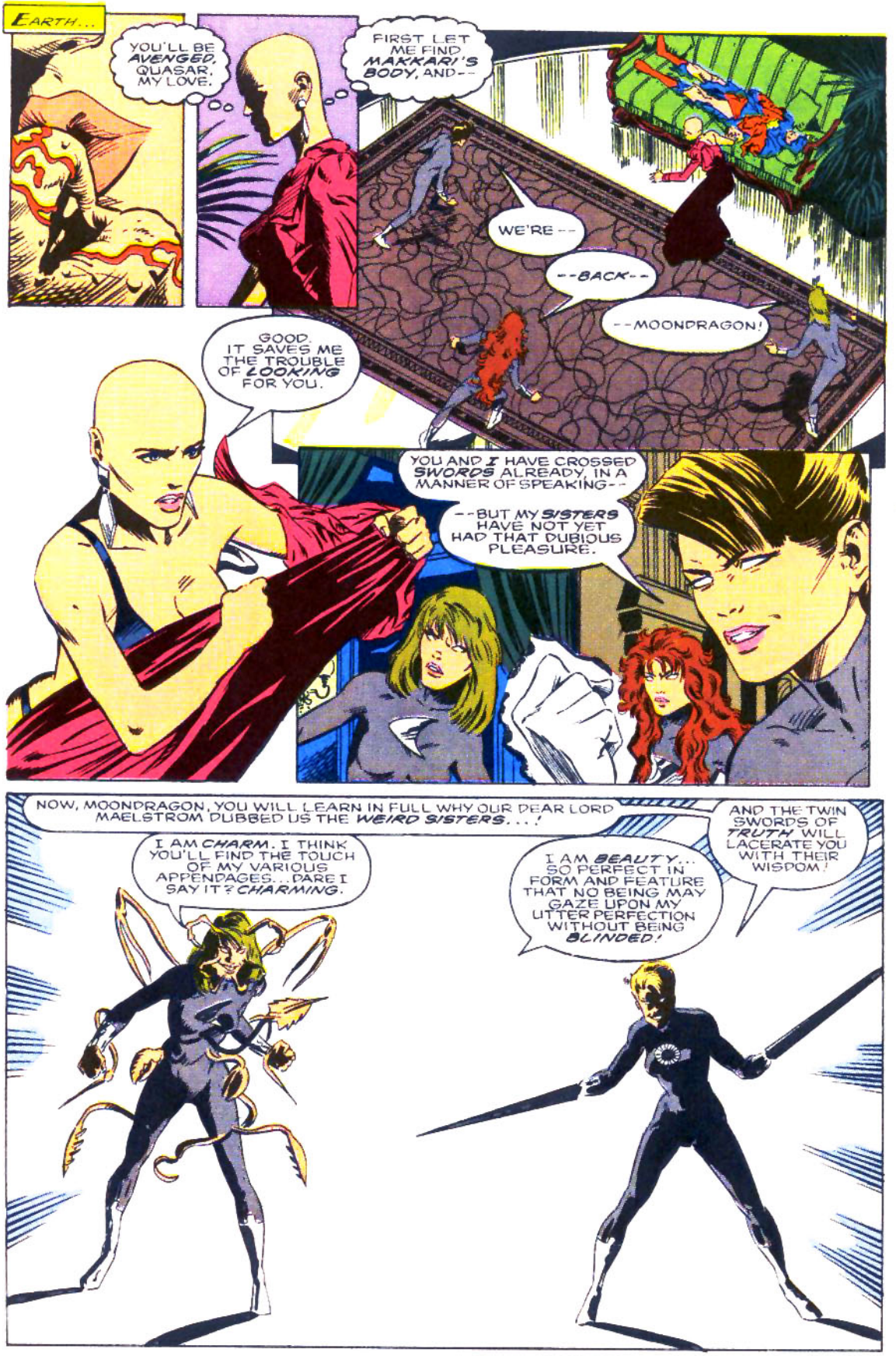

KNOW WHAT I AM THINKING, UATU?
YES. OF ALL THE WAYS THE UNIVERSE COULD END--
--YOU ARE THANKFUL THE ENDING THAT HAS COME IS ONE OF UNPARALLELED VISUAL MAGNIFICENCE.
...WILL YOU HOLD ME SO WE CAN END OUR WATCH TOGETHER?
UATU? WHEN WE CAN NO LONGER OUTDISTANCE THE EDGE OF OBLIVION...
ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE VORTEX...
BLAST!
MAELSTROM'S DEAD--COMPRESSED TO NOTHINGNESS IN THE CENTER OF THE BLACK HOLE--
--BUT THE UNIVERSE IS COLLAPSING FASTER THAN EVER, THANKS TO THE BOOST I GAVE IT IN ORDER TO ENTRAP MAELSTROM!
THE MIGHTY QUASAR, PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE--HA!
AGENT OF DESTRUCTION IS MORE MY SPEED!

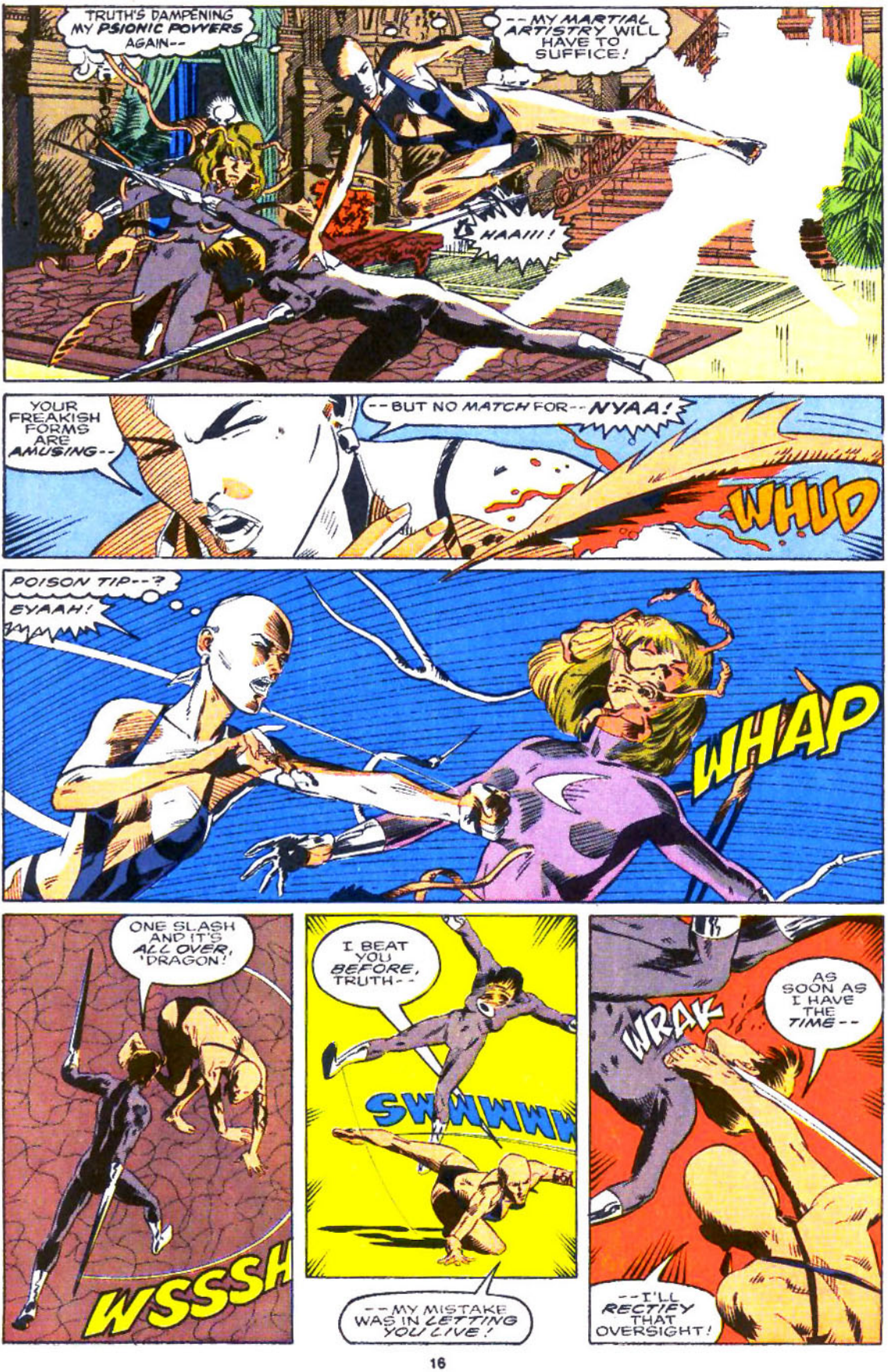

AND YET... INFINITY--WHO FOR SOME REASON I VISUALIZE AS THE WORLD'S FOXIEST FAIRY GODMOTHER--
--BELIEVES I'M THE UNIVERSE'S BEST HOPE FOR SALVATION!
THAT'S WHY SHE PLUCKED MY LIFE ESSENCE FROM MY DEAD BODY AND IMBUED IT WITH AN ASPECT OF HER TRULY INFINITE POWER.
THE TROUBLE IS... JUST AS IN MATHEMATICS THERE ARE NUMBERS GREATER THAN INFINITY--
--THERE APPARENTLY ARE TRANS-INFINITE FORCES IN THE UNIVERSE AS WELL.
AND EVEN WITH THE COSMIC AWARENESS EON BESTOWED UPON ME AS HIS DYING ACT, OUT HERE, FLITTING ABOUT THE EXPANDING SPHERE OF COLLAPSE LIKE A MICROBE AROUND A STAR, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT TO DO...!
NO CHOICE, I'VE GOT TO GO BACK INSIDE AND PRAY MY ENERGY-FORM WILL REMAIN COHESIVE LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO FIGURE OUT SOMETHING TO DO--!
HEY! JUST BECAUSE MY REAL BODY LOST ITS HANDS--
--IS THERE ANY REASON WHY MY ENERGY-BODY CAN'T HAVE SOME?
THAT'S BETTER!
GLOVED, NO LESS... LIKE THE COSTUME THAT LITTLE OLD LADY GAVE ME! THE ONE WHO CLAIMED TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ORIGIN OF ALL SUPER-POWERS!

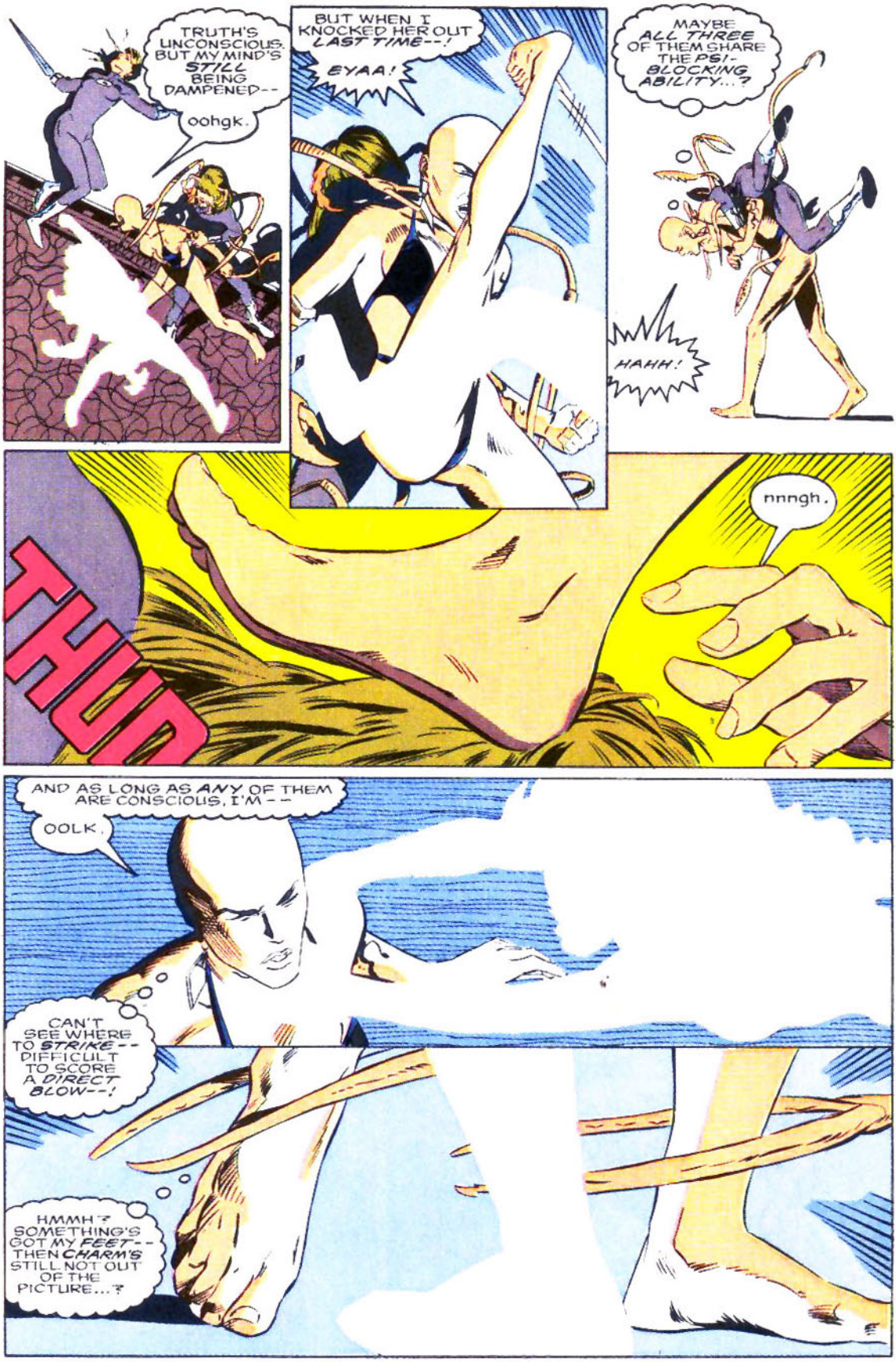
NOW I'LL JUST CONVERT A FRACTION OF ONE PER CENT OF MY ENERGY TO MATTER--
--AND THE IMMENSE GRAVITATION OF THE FIELD WILL DO THE REST!
IMPACT WITH THE EVENT HORIZON NANOSECONDS AWAY---
--TIME TO SUCK THE VOID!


NNNH.
COLDER... DARKER... BIGGER... THAN I REMEMBERED.
CONCENTRATE... ACCLIMATE MY COSMIC AWARENESS TO THE COSMOS WITHIN.
NEED TO FIND THE DEAD CENTER OF THE BLACK HOLE...
... THE POINT WHERE PHYSICAL LAWS HAVE BROKEN DOWN INTO ABSOLUTE CHAOS!
YES... YES... I SENSE THE LOCATION OF THAT POINT.
AND SINCE SPACE WITHIN THIS HOLE IS ALMOST INFINITELY SMALLER THAN THE CORRESPONDING SPACE IT HAS EATEN UP IN THE UNIVERSE OUTSIDE--
---I'M ALREADY THERE!

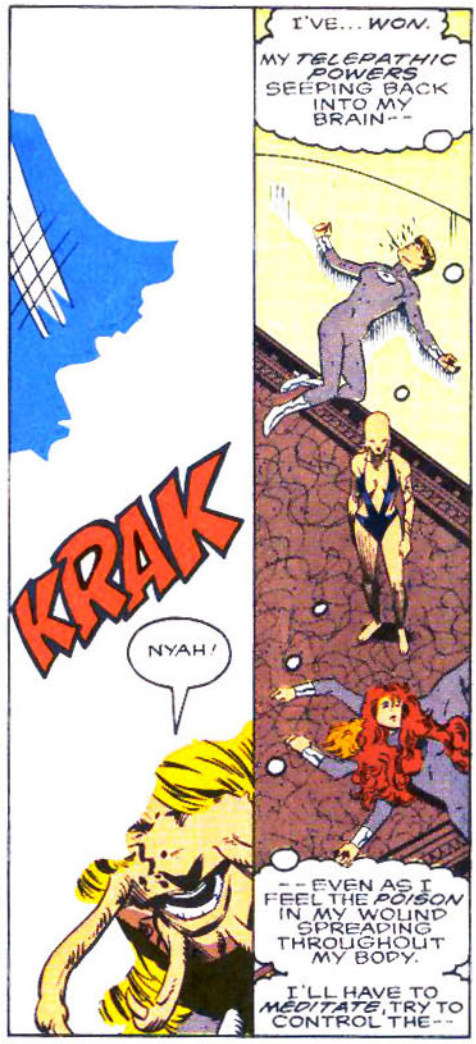

I'M--CRUMPLING! DISTORTING! BREAKING UP! ALL BY THE UNIMAGINABLE GRAVITATIONAL PRESSURE!
IT IS TAKING EVERY ERG OF THE NIGH-INFINITE POWER THAT INFINITY GAVE ME JUST TO KEEP MY ENERGY-FORM FROM BEING CRUSHED INTO NOTHINGNESS.
AND WHILE I EXPEND ALL THAT ENERGY IN SELF-MAINTENANCE I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NONE TO DEVOTE TO THE TASK OF TRYING TO CHANGE THE COSMOLOGICAL CONSTANT--
--THE SUM OF ALL ENERGY IN THE UNIVERSE--
--MAKE IT A WHOLE POSITIVE VALUE--
--SO THE UNIVERSE STOPS CONTRACTING AND BEGINS TO EXPAND AGAIN!
ONE OPTION.
LET GO OF MY ENERGY BODY.
LET IT BE SMASHED INTO NOTHINGNESS.
AND PRAY THAT THE CRUNCH OF THE NIGH-INFINITE ENERGY INFINITY ENDOWED IN IT...
...WILL PROVIDE THE IMPETUS TO RESTART UNIVERSAL EXPANSION!
BODY... MIND... SLIPPING AWAY...
THIS... REALLY... IS IT... THIS TIME.
GOODBYE...
...MOM...
...DAD...
...CONSCIOUSNESS.


EARTH...
YOU'LL BE AVENGED, QUASAR, MY LOVE.
FIRST LET ME FIND MAKKARI'S BODY, AND--
WE'RE--
--BACK--
--MOONDRAGON!
GOOD. IT SAVES ME THE TROUBLE OF LOOKING FOR YOU.
YOU AND I HAVE CROSSED SWORDS ALREADY, IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING--
--BUT MY SISTERS HAVE NOT YET HAD THAT DUBIOUS PLEASURE.
NOW, MOONDRAGON, YOU WILL LEARN IN FULL WHY OUR DEAR LORD MAELSTROM DUBBED US THE WEIRD SISTERS...!
I AM CHARM. I THINK YOU'LL FIND THE TOUCH OF MY VARIOUS APPENDAGES...DARE I SAY IT? CHARMING.
I AM BEAUTY... SO PERFECT IN FORM AND FEATURE THAT NO BEING MAY GAZE UPON MY UTTER PERFECTION WITHOUT BEING BLINDED!
AND THE TWIN SWORDS OF TRUTH WILL LACERATE YOU WITH THEIR WISDOM!

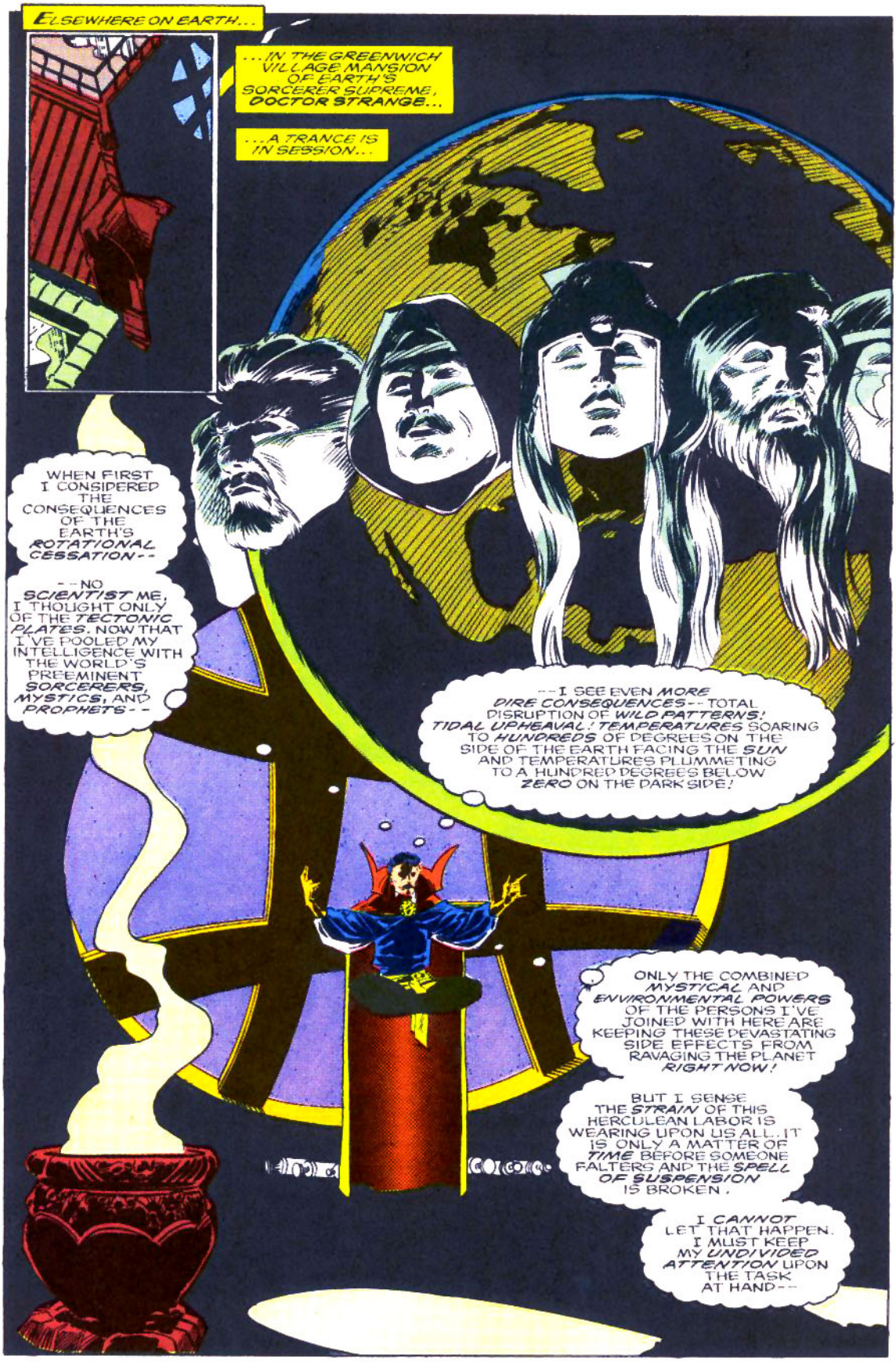

TRUTH'S DAMPENING MY PSIONIC POWERS AGAIN--
--MY MARTIAL ARTISTRY WILL HAVE TO SUFFICE!
HAAIII!
YOUR FREAKISH FORMS ARE AMUSING--
--BUT NO MATCH FOR--NYAA!
WHUD
POISON TIP--?
EYAAH!
WHAP
ONE SLASH AND IT'S ALL OVER, 'DRAGON!
WSSSH
I BEAT YOU BEFORE, TRUTH--
SWWWW
--MY MISTAKE WAS IN LETTING YOU LIVE!
WRAK
AS SOON AS I HAVE THE TIME--
--I'LL RECTIFY THAT OVERSIGHT!


TRUTH'S UNCONSCIOUS, BUT MY MIND'S STILL BEING DAMPENED--
oohgk.
BUT WHEN I KNOCKED HER OUT LAST TIME--!
EYAA!
MAYBE ALL THREE OF THEM SHARE THE PSI-BLOCKING ABILITY...?
HAHH!
THUD
nnngh.
AND AS LONG AS ANY OF THEM ARE CONSCIOUS, I'M--
OOLK.
CAN'T SEE WHERE TO STRIKE-- DIFFICULT TO SCORE A DIRECT BLOW--!
HMMH? SOMETHING'S GOT MY FEET-- THEN CHARM'S STILL NOT OUT OF THE PICTURE...?

ROOTED TO THE SPOT--
--BUT IF I CAN JUST HOIST BEAUTY OVER MY HEAD--
--AND DROP HER--!


I'VE... WON.
MY TELEPATHIC POWERS SEEPING BACK INTO MY BRAIN--
KRAK
NYAH!
--EVEN AS I FEEL THE POISON IN MY WOUND SPREADING THROUGHOUT MY BODY.
I'LL HAVE TO MEDITATE, TRY TO CONTROL THE--

MOONDRAGON...?
WHO--?


ELSEWHERE ON EARTH...
...IN THE GREENWICH VILLAGE MANSION OF EARTH'S SORCERER SUPREME, DOCTOR STRANGE...
...A TRANCE IS IN SESSION...
WHEN FIRST I CONSIDERED THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE EARTH'S ROTATIONAL CESSATION--
--NO SCIENTIST ME, I THOUGHT ONLY OF THE TECTONIC PLATES. NOW THAT I'VE POOLED MY INTELLIGENCE WITH THE WORLD'S PREEMINENT SORCERERS, MYSTICS, AND PROPHETS--
--I SEE EVEN MORE DIRE CONSEQUENCES-- TOTAL DISRUPTION OF WILD PATTERNS! TIDAL UPHEAVAL! TEMPERATURES SOARING TO HUNDREDS OF DEGREES ON THE SIDE OF THE EARTH FACING THE SUN AND TEMPERATURES PLUMMETING TO A HUNDRED DEGREES BELOW ZERO ON THE DARK SIDE!
ONLY THE COMBINED MYSTICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL POWERS OF THE PERSONS I'VE JOINED WITH HERE ARE KEEPING THESE DEVASTATING SIDE EFFECTS FROM RAVAGING THE PLANET RIGHT NOW!
BUT I SENSE THE STRAIN OF THIS HERCULEAN LABOR IS WEARING UPON US ALL. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOMEONE FALTERS AND THE SPELL OF SUSPENSION IS BROKEN.
I CANNOT LET THAT HAPPEN. I MUST KEEP MY UNDIVIDED ATTENTION UPON THE TASK AT HAND--

--NO MATTER--EH...?
THOOB
GREETINGS, DOCTOR. I AM DEATHURGE, AGENT OF OBLIVION...AND YOU ARE MY TARGET!
NO--NOT NOW!
STRANGE...?
WHAT'S HAPPENED...?
WHERE HAVE YOU GONE?
WE NEED YOU.
YOU'RE THE LINCHPIN OF OUR SPELL!
WE CAN'T HOLD ON WITHOUT YOU!
THIS CREATURE... SOME SORT OF COSMIC PHANTOM...!
BEGONE, DEATHURGE--OR BY THE VISHANTI, I'LL--
SPARE ME YOUR THREATS, DOCTOR.
THE ENTITIES YOU TRAFFIC WITH DO NOT FRIGHTEN ME.
NOR DO--
WHAT--?!?

HIYA, DOC! THE WHIZZER AT YOUR SERVICE!
GOT A MENTAL FLASH FROM ARCANNA THAT YOU WERE IN DISTRESS SO I HIGHTAILED IT FROM THE PROJECT TO CHECK IT OUT.
--SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--!
COOL IT, PAL--
TIME TO DELOUSE YOUR HOUSE.
--I COULD DODGE YOUR SLOW MOTION FLAILINGS IN MY SLEEP.
KRAASH
ARCKY SAID GET THE DANGER AWAY FROM STRANGE AT ALL COSTS--
--HOPE THAT INCLUDES THE COST OF REPLACING THAT ART DECO SKYLIGHT OF HIS!
IT WAS THE QUICKEST WAY OUT!

A MERE *SIXTY FEET* TO THE GROUND.

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD THINK ABOUT GETTING MY FEET *UNDER ME* RIGHT ABOUT NOW--

--SO I CAN START *BREAKING OUR FALL* WITH--

HEY! WHAT'S HE--?

SKIS! *FLYING* SKIS!

MMMPH!

WHOA- *NO!* LOOKS LIKE I'M NO LONGER THE *DIRECTOR* OF THIS LITTLE TWO-MAN CRUISE!

BUT IF BLACKY HERE THINKS ANY AMOUNT OF *FANCY FLYING* IS GOING TO MAKE ME *LET GO* OF HIS CLOAK--

--THEN HE JUST DOESN'T *KNOW* THIS OTHER-EARTHLY SUPER-SPEEDSTER VERY WELL!

FOR *WEEKS* NOW-- EVER SINCE THE *EX-SQUADRON SUPREME* WAS FORCED TO SETTLE HERE-- I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR SOMETHING *MEANINGFUL* TO DO.

AND IF *BAGGING* A DARK DEVIL AND MATCHING *VIBRATION RATES* WITH HIM AS HE TRIES TO BECOME *INTANGIBLE* ON ME ISN'T MEANINGFUL--

--THEN AT LEAST IT'S *ONE TON OF FUN!*

YEE-HAAAA!

HEY, WHIZ-- LOOK OUT FOR THAT WALL!
WHAT W-- OH, THAT WALL!
SLAM
SPECTRUM! HYPERION! ABOUT TIME YOU GOT HERE!
ARCANNA SENT US AS BACK-UP. SHE SAID THE GUY HASSLING DOC STRANGE HAS TO BE PRETTY SLICK TO GET THROUGH HIS HOUSE'S MYSTICAL DEFENSES.
IF THERE'S ANY FIGHT LEFT IN HIM, I'LL SEE TO BEATING IT OUT!

THE DESIGNATED CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE...
WITH EACH PASSING MICA, MORE SPECTATORS ARRIVE TO WITNESS THE END...
"...MIGHTY GALACTUS AND HIS HERALD... THE RIGELLIANS... THE ELAN...
"YET NO ONE TAKES ACTION.
"NO ONE VENTURES FORTH INTO THE VOID.
"NO ONE ASSAILS THE UNKNOWN.
"BUT THERE IS SOMETHING FASCINATING ABOUT THE EXPANDING DARKNESS. SOMETHING IRRESISTIBLE, SOMETHING PROVOCATIVE.
"PERHAPS IF ONE STARES INTO THE ABYSS FOR TOO LONG, THE ABYSS BEGINS TO STARE AT YOU."

WITHIN...

AGAIN? I CAN'T *BELIEVE* IT! I'VE SURVIVED AGAIN SOMEHOW! HOW MANY *TIMES* DOES THIS MAKE?

YOU ARE IN THE REALM OF *OBLIVION*, EARTH-SPECK.

I AM *OBLIVION*.

RIGHT. ANOTHER *CONCEPTUAL ENTITY*. SO WHAT AM I *DOING* HERE, OBIE?

I *ASKED* HIM TO BRING YOU HERE, BOY.

LORD MAELSTROM, AT YOUR DISSERVICE.

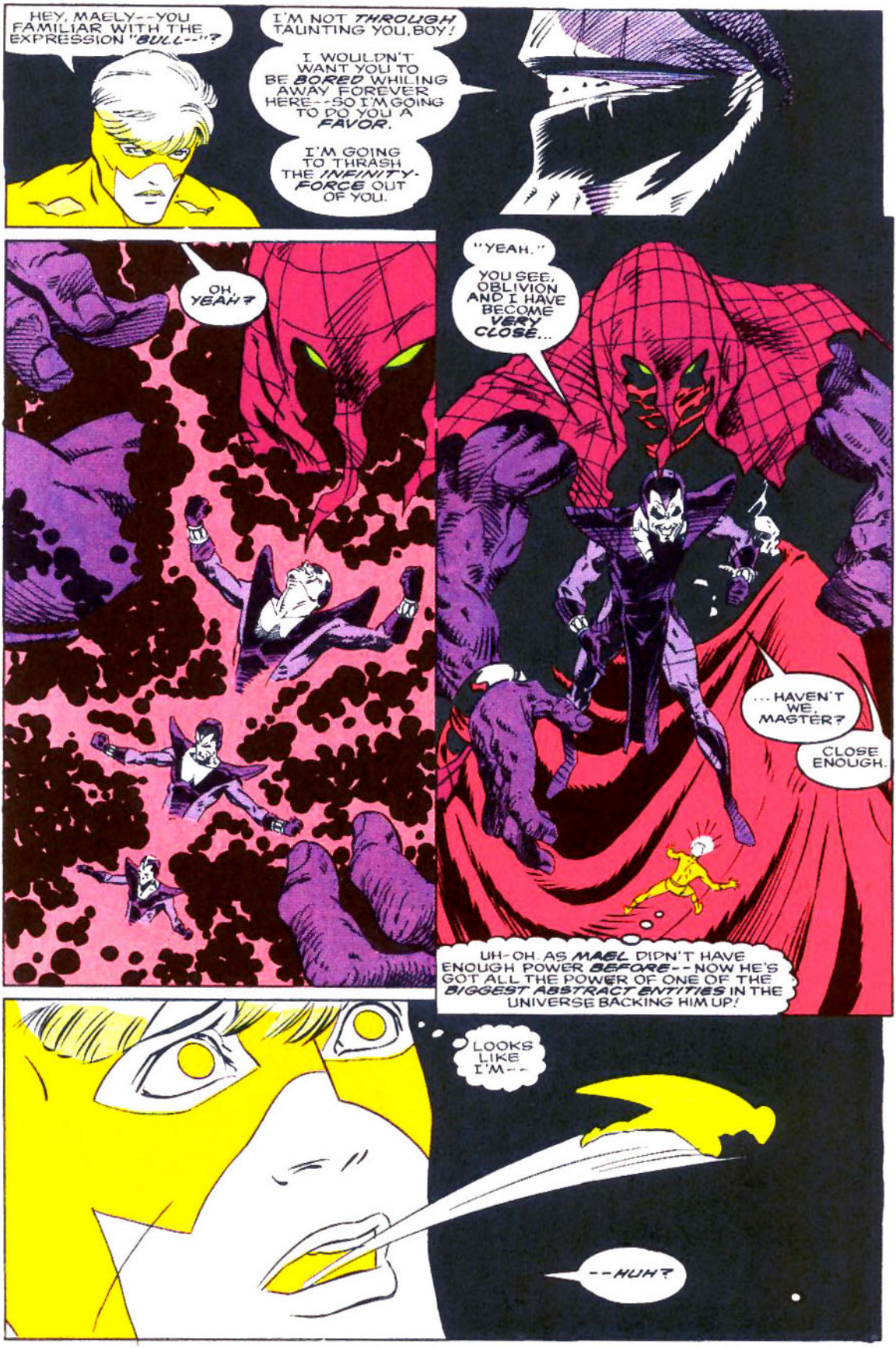
THE UNIVERSE IS *COLLAPSING*--AND YOU --*ALMOST*--REVERSED THE PROCESS, HAD WE NOT PULLED YOU THROUGH THE *CENTER OF THE HOLE* JUST IN TIME.

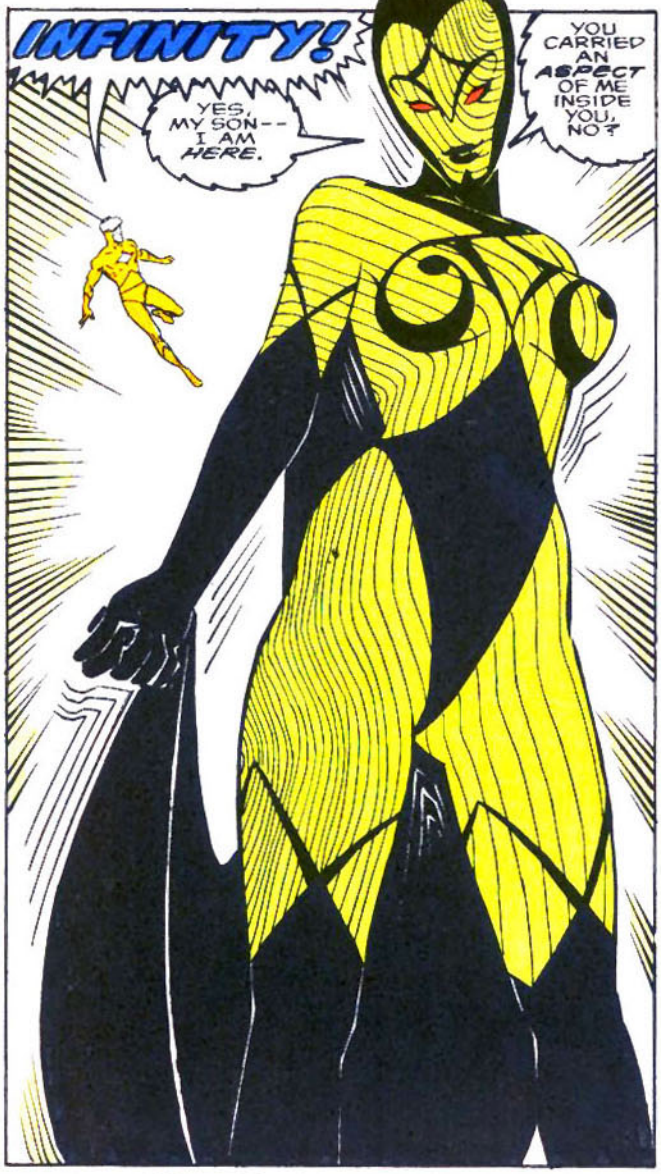
NOT QUITE. I TOTALLY *PERISHED*. OBLIVION *RECREATED* ME HERE. I'M HIS *AVATAR*, YOU SEE.

AND YOU, MY ENEMY, ARE NOW *TRAPPED* HERE. GREAT OBLIVION HOLDS YOU IN HIS *TRACKLESS REALM* OUTSIDE YOUR UNIVERSE, AND HAS THE POWER TO DO SO... *FOREVER*.

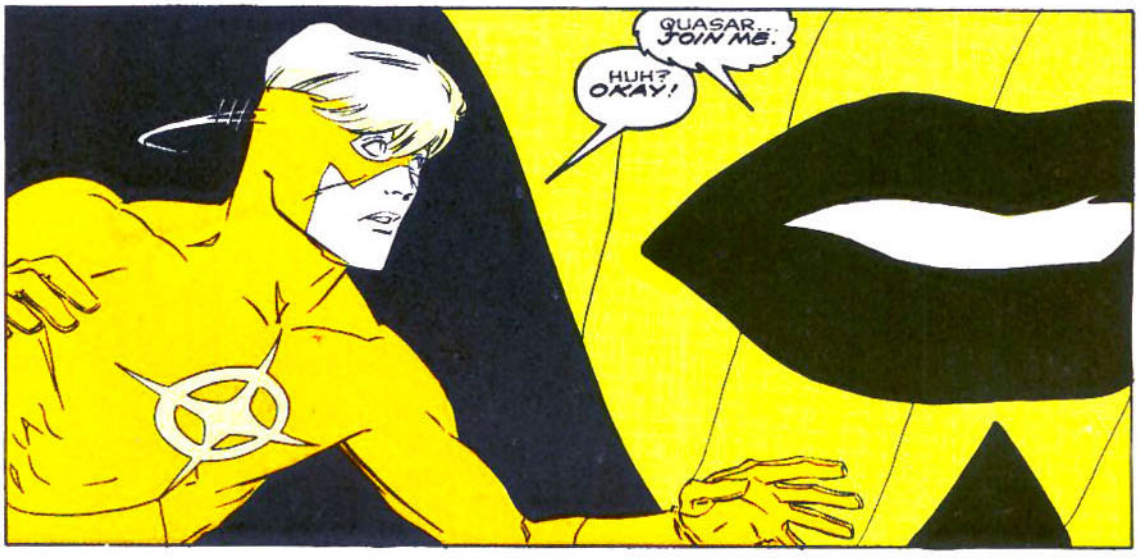
HUH? THAT'S--

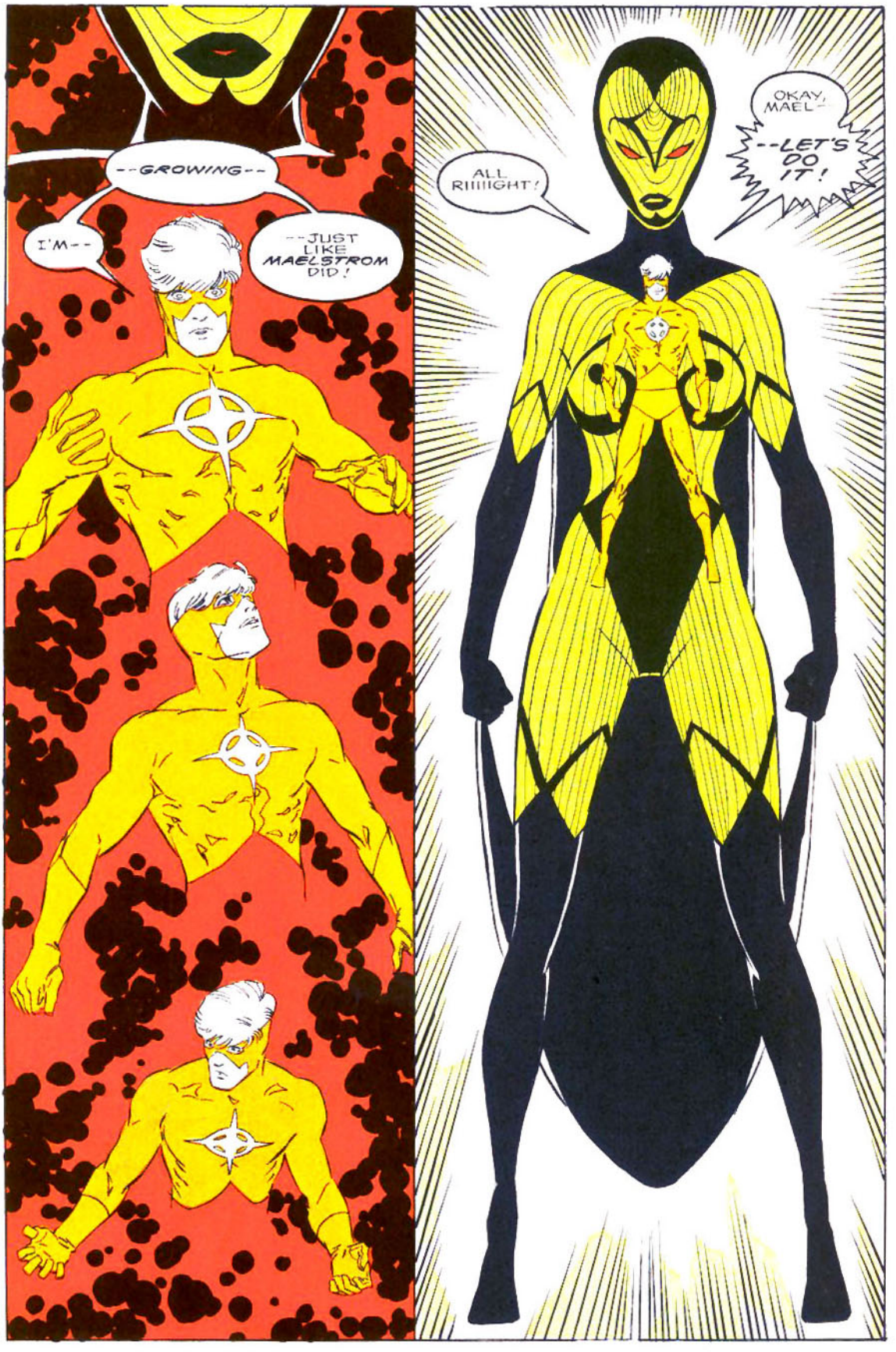
JUST LIKE OBIE RESCUED *YOU*, HUH?

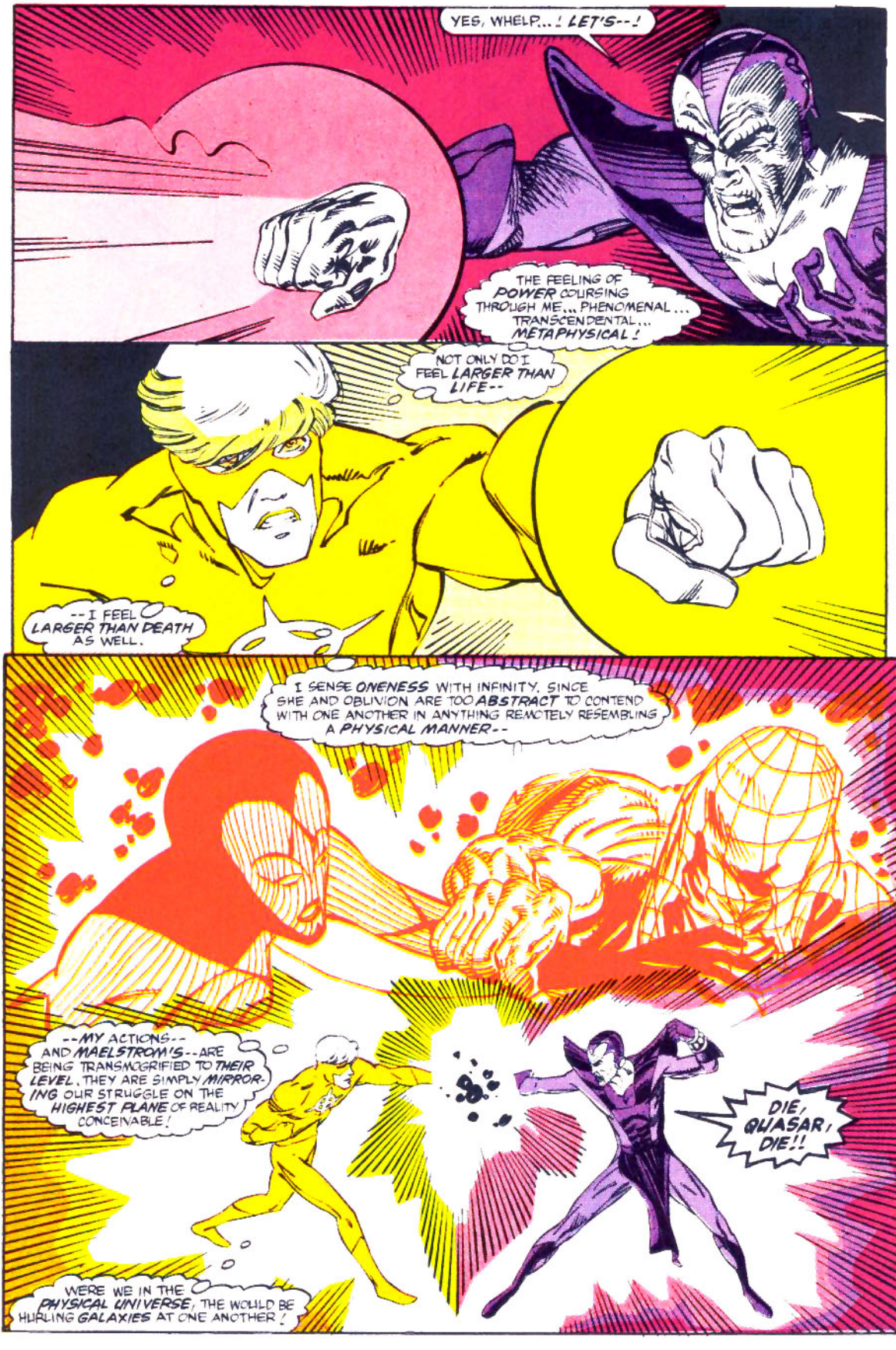

HEY, MAELY--YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE EXPRESSION "BULL--"?
I'M NOT THROUGH TAUNTING YOU, BOY!
I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO BE BORED WHILING AWAY FOREVER HERE--SO I'M GOING TO DO YOU A FAVOR.
I'M GOING TO THRASH THE INFINITY-FORCE OUT OF YOU.
OH, YEAH?
"YEAH."
YOU SEE, OBLIVION AND I HAVE BECOME VERY CLOSE...
...HAVEN'T WE, MASTER?
CLOSE ENOUGH.
UH-OH. AS MAEL DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER BEFORE--NOW HE'S GOT ALL THE POWER OF ONE OF THE BIGGEST ABSTRACT ENTITIES IN THE UNIVERSE BACKING HIM UP!
LOOKS LIKE I'M--
--HUH?

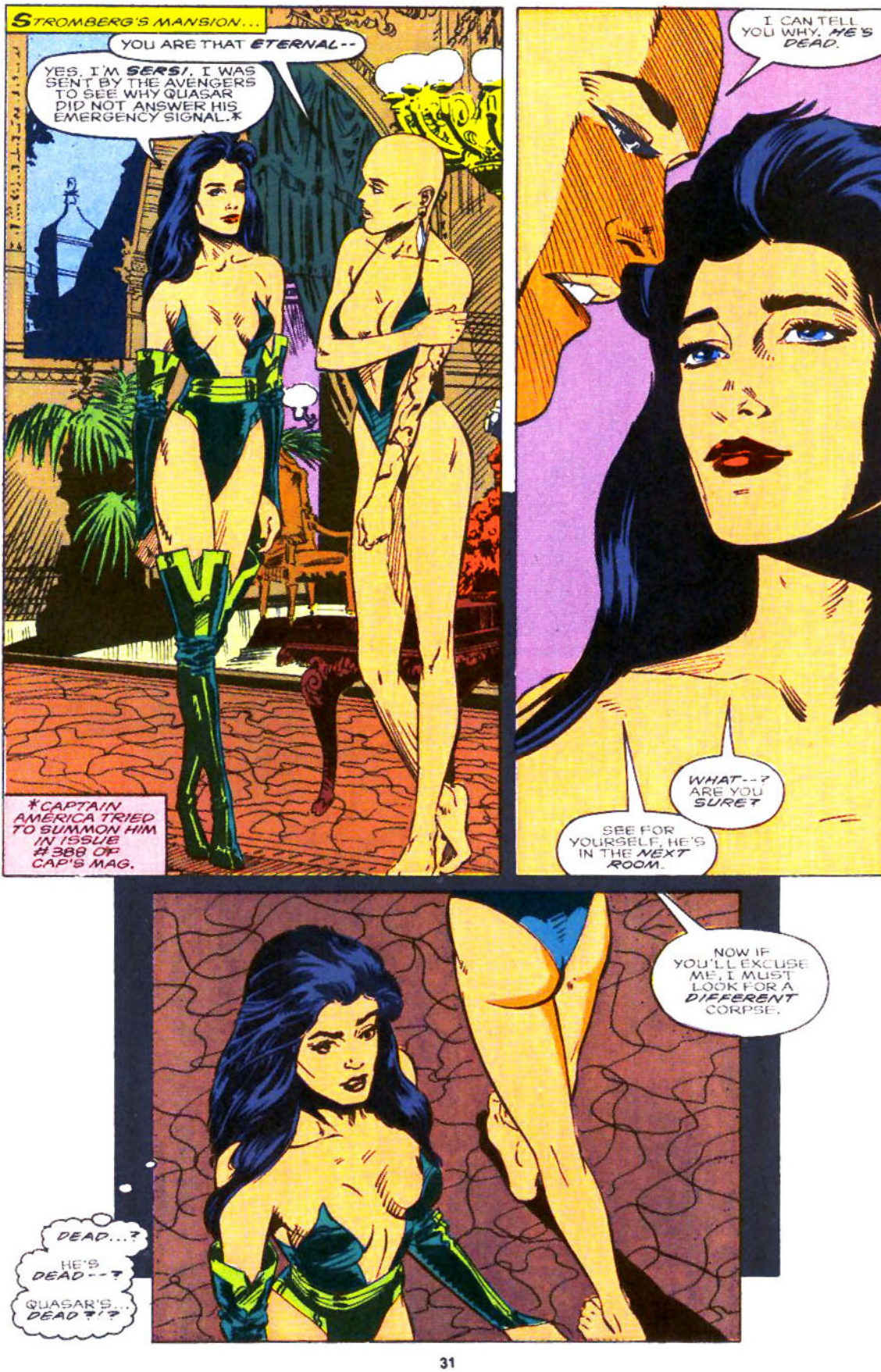

INFINITY!
YES, MY SON-- I AM HERE.
YOU CARRIED AN ASPECT OF ME INSIDE YOU, NO?

MAELSTROM IS YOUR AVATAR, OBLIVION. QUASAR IS MINE. NEED THEY REALLY CONTEST WITH ONE ANOTHER?
IS THE BALANCE THAT HAS ALWAYS EXISTED BETWEEN OUR FACTIONS OF ONTOLOGY NOT SUFFICIENT?
NO. I BELIEVE THE TIME IS RIPE FOR A CHANGE.
YOU MADE A MISTAKE MANIFESTING HERE, INFINITY. NOW YOU'LL SHARE QUASAR'S FATE!


QUASAR... JOIN ME.
HUH? OKAY!


--GROWING--
I'M--
--JUST LIKE MAELSTROM DID!
ALL RIIIIGHT!
OKAY, MAEL--
--LET'S DO IT!


YES, WHELP...! LET'S--!
THE FEELING OF POWER COURSING THROUGH ME... PHENOMENAL... TRANSCENDENTAL... METAPHYSICAL!
NOT ONLY DO I FEEL LARGER THAN LIFE--
--I FEEL LARGER THAN DEATH AS WELL.
I SENSE ONENESS WITH INFINITY. SINCE SHE AND OBLIVION ARE TOO ABSTRACT TO CONTEND WITH ONE ANOTHER IN ANYTHING REMOTELY RESEMBLING A PHYSICAL MANNER--
--MY ACTIONS-- AND MAELSTROM'S--ARE BEING TRANSMOGRIFIED TO THEIR LEVEL. THEY ARE SIMPLY MIRRORING OUR STRUGGLE ON THE HIGHEST PLANE OF REALITY CONCEIVABLE!
DIE, QUASAR, DIE!!
WERE WE IN THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE, I'D BE HURLING GALAXIES AT ONE ANOTHER!


STROMBERG'S MANSION...
YOU ARE THAT ETERNAL--
YES. I'M SERSI. I WAS SENT BY THE AVENGERS TO SEE WHY QUASAR DID NOT ANSWER HIS EMERGENCY SIGNAL.*
*CAPTAIN AMERICA TRIED TO SUMMON HIM IN ISSUE #388 OF CAP'S MAG.
I CAN TELL YOU WHY. HE'S DEAD.
WHAT--? ARE YOU SURE?
SEE FOR YOURSELF. HE'S IN THE NEXT ROOM.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I MUST LOOK FOR A DIFFERENT CORPSE.
DEAD...?
HE'S DEAD--?
QUASAR'S... DEAD?!?

SOON...
HE IS DEAD! BUT HOW? WHO DID IT TO--
MAKKARI!!!
WAIT, MOONDRAGON--MAKKARI CAN NOT BE DEAD.
HE'S AN ETERNAL LIKE MYSELF. ETERNALS CANNOT DIE. DEATH DOESN'T MEAN THE SAME THING TO OUR KIND IT MEANS TO YOURS.
LET ME SEE HIM.
BE MY GUEST.
HMM. HIS HEART HAS STOPPED. BUT A SIMPLE SUBMOLECULAR JOSTLING SHOULD---
IT'S NOT WORKING, MAKKARI...WHAT DID THEY DO TO YOU?!?
THAT IS SOMETHING THAT SHALL NOT TROUBLE YOU FOR VERY LONG.
HELIO! GRONK! ATTACK!
MAELSTROM'S MINIONS HAVE RECOVERED!

CAN'T YOU SEE WE'RE BUSY?!?
WHOAAA!
EOOOSKRREEEE!
NNGONNK!
I'M BEGINNING TO LIKE YOU, SERSI.
UNFORTUNATELY IT'LL WEAR OFF IN A WHILE.
WERE...THEY THE ONES WHO DID THIS TO QUASAR AND MAKKARI?
NO. THEIR EMPLOYER WAS MAELSTROM.
MAELSTROM...? HE ATTACKED THE ETERNALS ONCE * I THOUGHT HE HAD DISCORPORATED.
THE EVIL ALWAYS FIND A WAY TO CHEAT DEATH. IT IS ONLY THE GOOD WHO HAVE DIFFICULTIES.
* BACK IN AVENGERS #247-248.

GREENWICH VILLAGE.

YOU GUYS *GOT* HIM?

THE SKI BUM'S NOT GOING TO BE SKIING *ANYWHERE* AS LONG AS HE'S GOT YOUR *LEAD BOOTIES* ON.

WE CAN *HOLD HIM*, SPECTRUM. YOU GO CHECK UP ON *DR. STRANGE*.

MAKE SURE THIS *DARK DEMON* DOESN'T HAVE ANY *BUDDIES!*

RIGHT.

HMH! HE'S REPAIRED HIS *WINDOW* ALREADY.

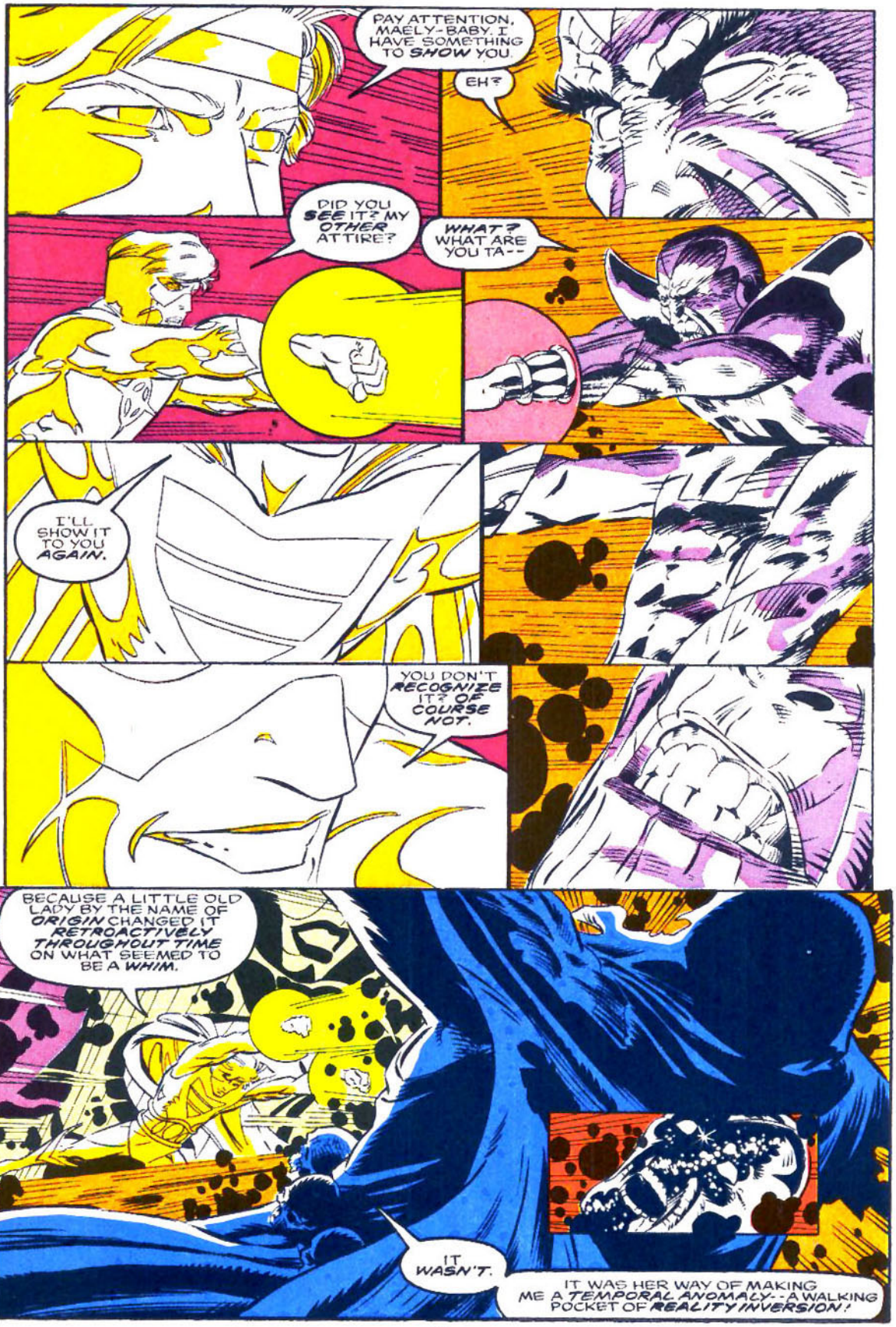
OH, MAN--STRANGE LOOKS REALLY IN A *BAD WAY*. WHATEVER IT IS HE'S DOING MUST BE TAKING *A LOT* OUT OF HIM...!

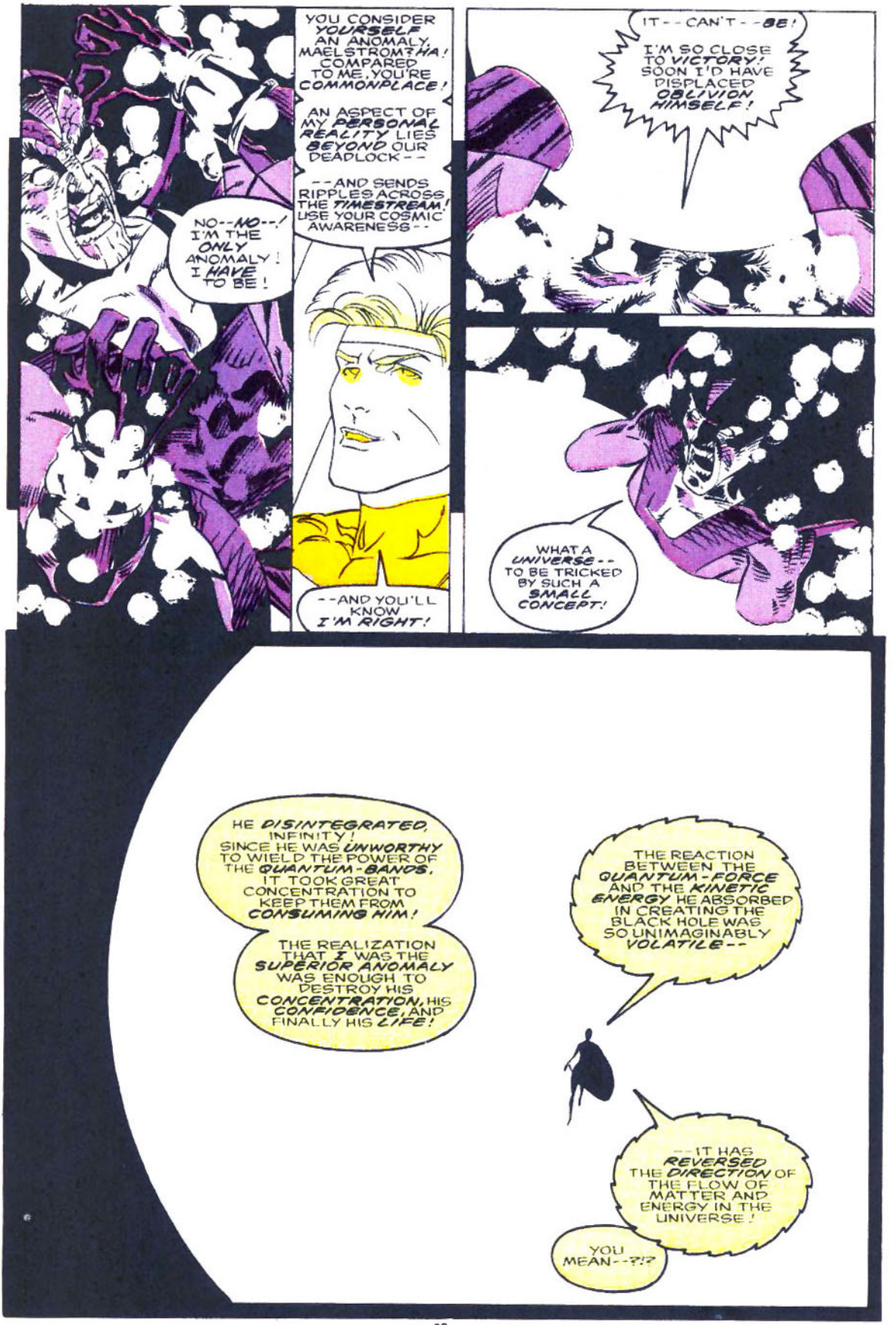
WISH I COULD *HELP*... BUT *MY* KIND OF POWER JUST DOESN'T *MIX* WITH HIS!

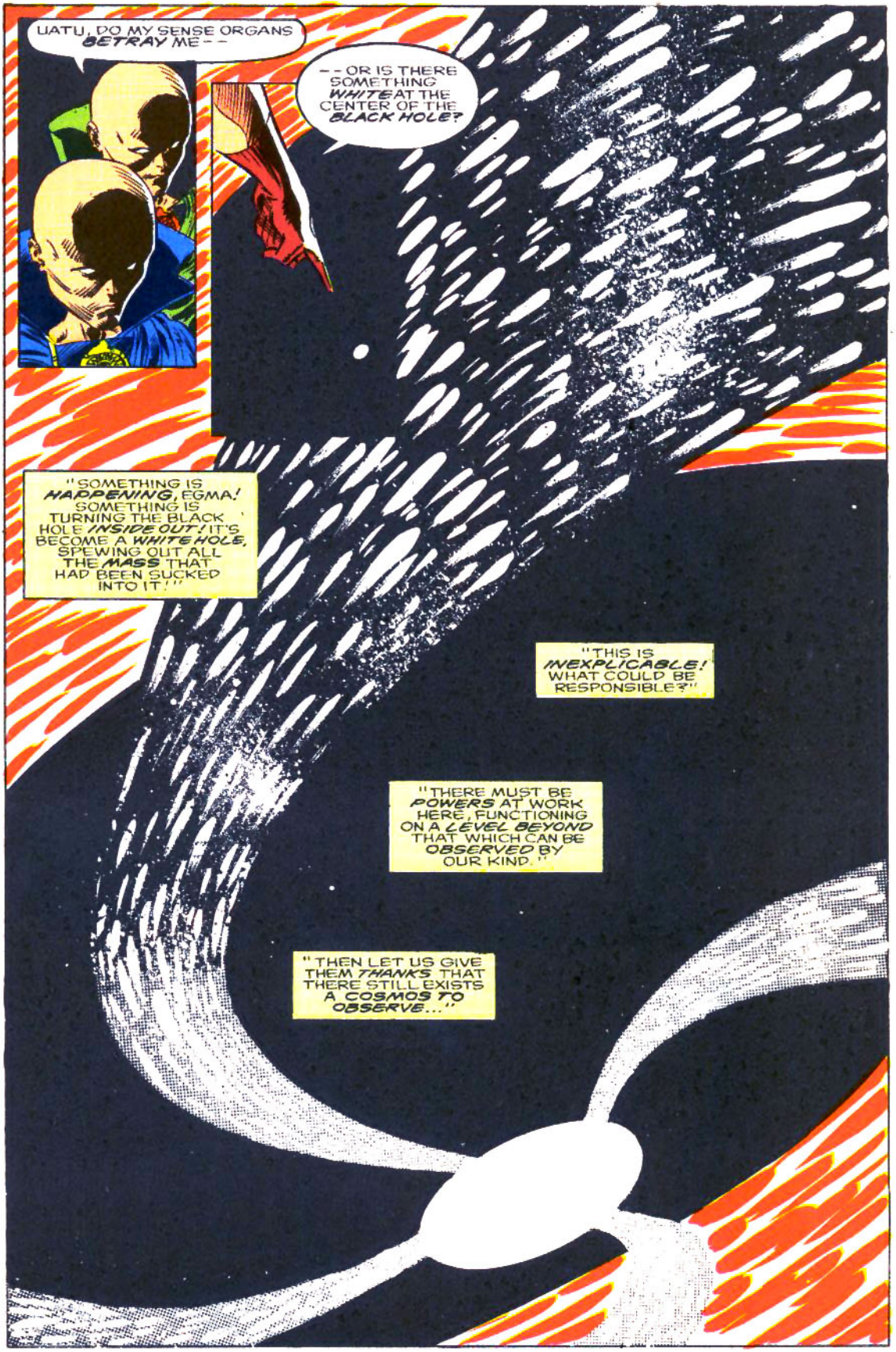
JUST A FEW MORE *MOMENTS*, MAGE OF MAGES, AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO *LET GO!*

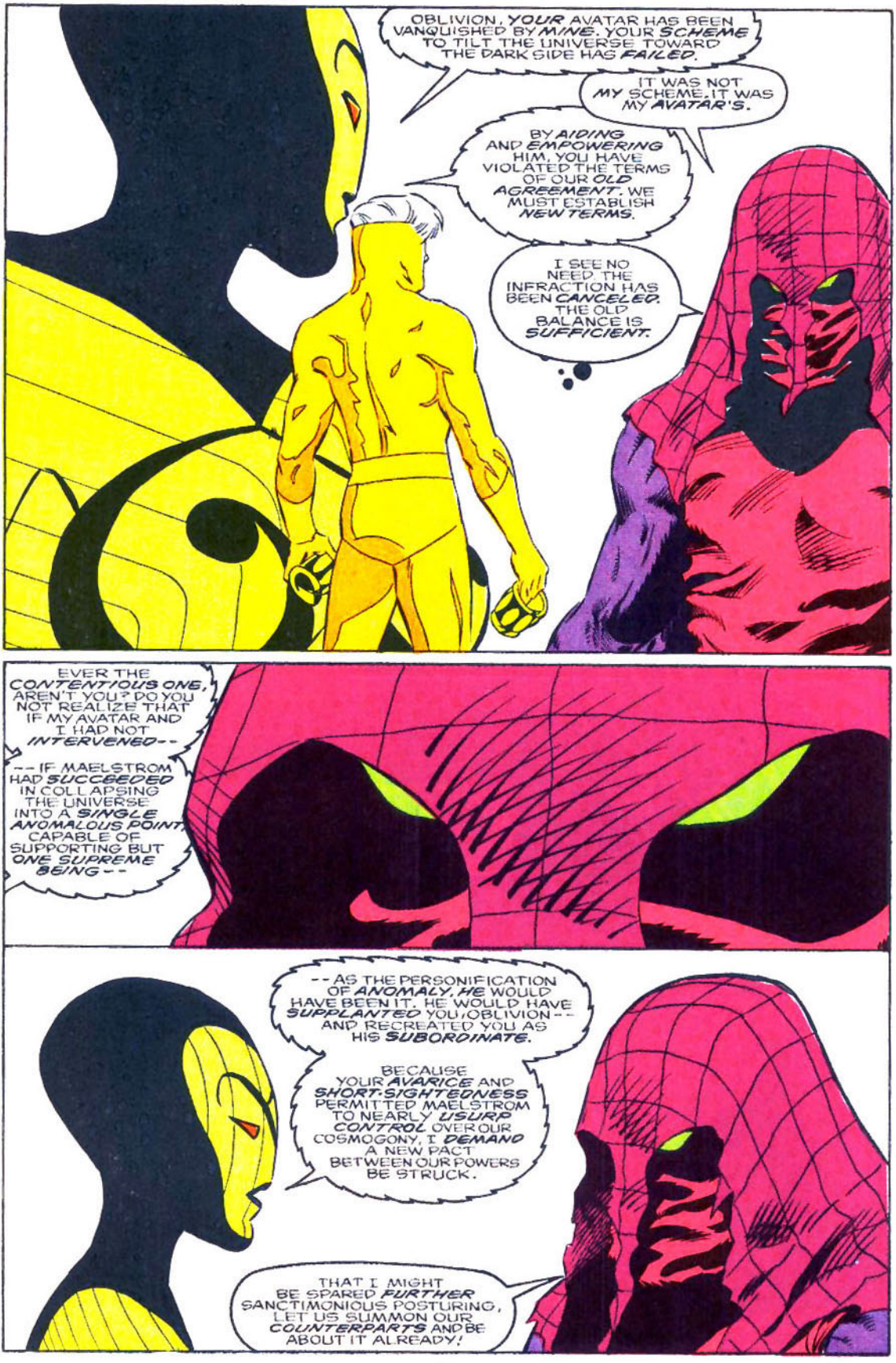
I SENSE THE FATE OF *ALL LIFE* IS EVEN NOW BEING *DECIDED*.

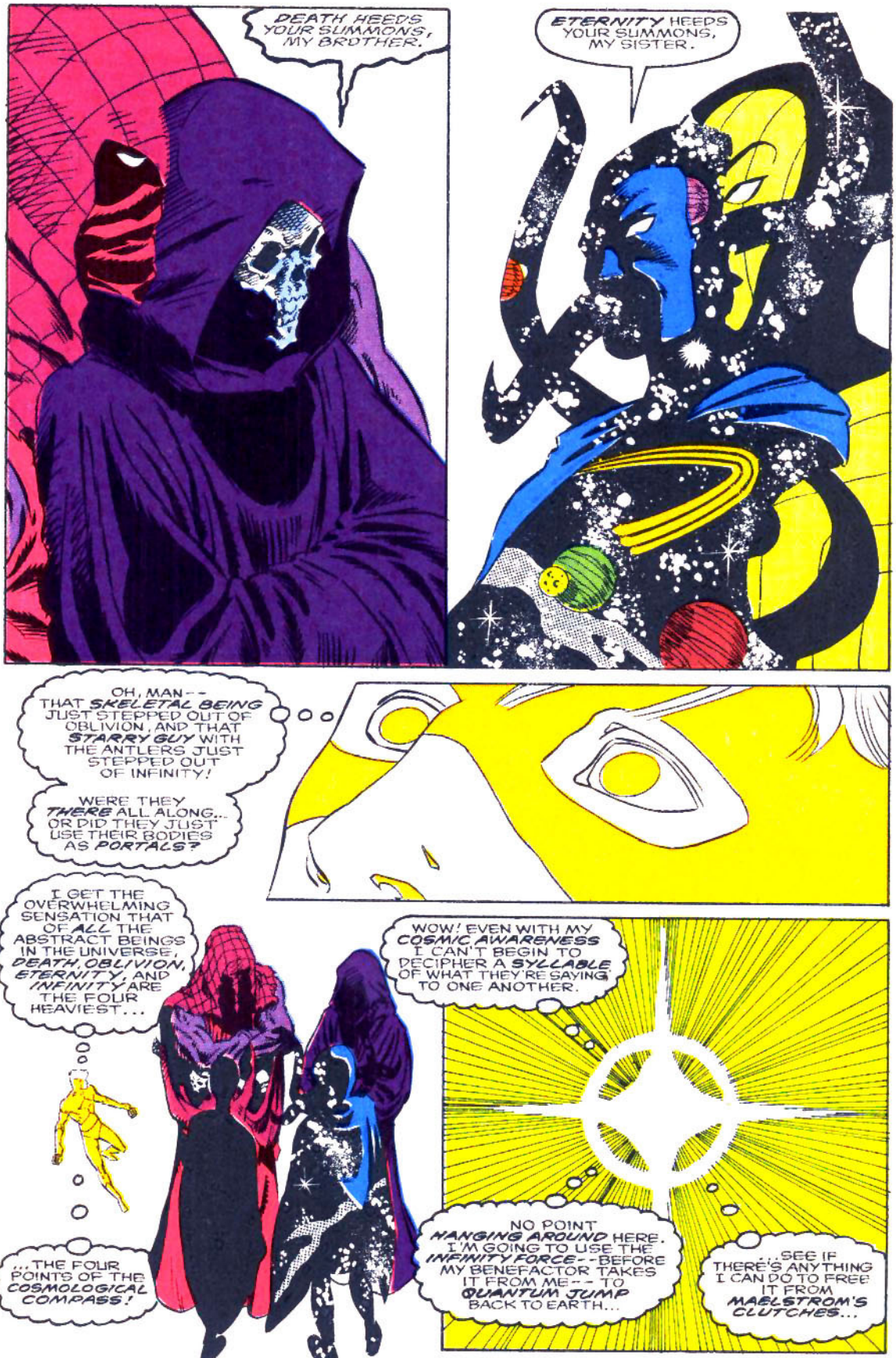
THE QUANTUM ZONE...
HA HA HA--WE ARE TOO EVENLY MATCHED, QUASAR!
I HAVE YOU AT A STANDSTILL--
--AND THE LONGER WE REMAIN LOCKED IN COMBAT HERE, THE GREATER THE DESTRUCTION TO THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE!
IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE BLACK HOLE AT THE CENTER OF THE COSMOS WILL HAVE GROWN SO LARGE AND SO DENSE THAT NOT ALL THE POWER OF INFINITY WILL BE ABLE TO REVERSE IT!
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS HOLD YOU HERE UNTIL THAT TIME, AND I WILL HAVE WON! THE UNIVERSE WILL BELONG TO THE ONLY THING THAT CAN SURVIVE ITS END--
--THE ULTIMATE ANOMALY--ME!!!
IS HE RIGHT? IS THERE NOTHING I CAN DO? AM I TRAPPED HERE PLAYING THE FINAL ROUND OF OUR BATTLE--HIS WAY?!?
OH, COSMIC AWARENESS--WHAT GOOD ARE YOU UNLESS YOU CAN SHOW ME SOMETHING THAT HE HAS OVERLOOKED?
THAT...THAT'S IT!

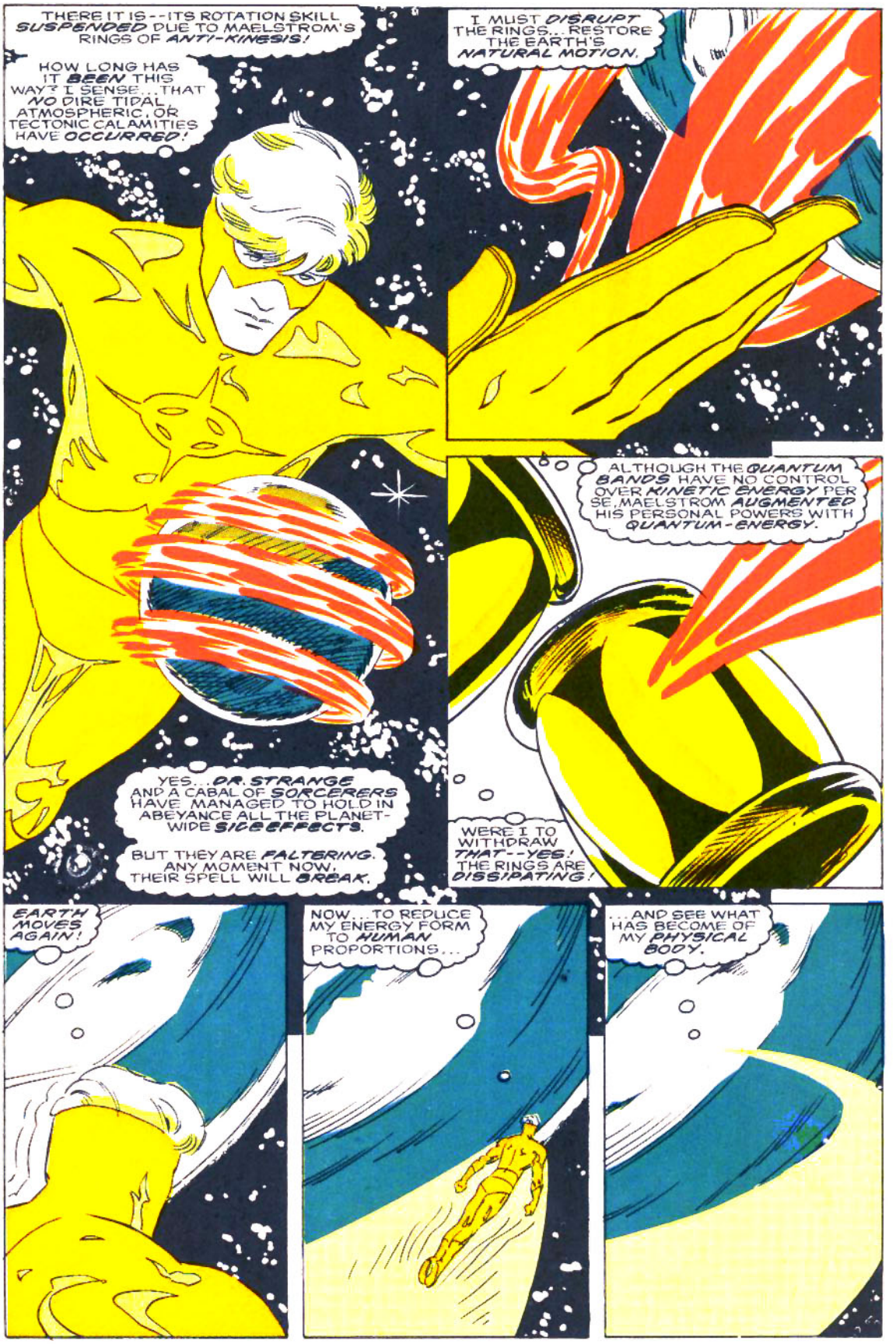

PAY ATTENTION, MAELY-BABY. I HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.
EH?
DID YOU SEE IT? MY OTHER ATTIRE?
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TA--
I'LL SHOW IT TO YOU AGAIN.
YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE IT? OF COURSE NOT.
BECAUSE A LITTLE OLD LADY BY THE NAME OF ORIGIN CHANGED IT RETROACTIVELY THROUGHOUT TIME ON WHAT SEEMED TO BE A WHIM.
IT WASN'T.
IT WAS HER WAY OF MAKING ME A TEMPORAL ANOMALY--A WALKING POCKET OF REALITY INVERSION!


NO--NO--! I'M THE ONLY ANOMALY! I HAVE TO BE!
YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ANOMALY, MAELSTROM? HA! COMPARED TO ME, YOU'RE COMMONPLACE!
AN ASPECT OF MY PERSONAL REALITY LIES BEYOND OUR DEADLOCK--
--AND SENDS RIPPLES ACROSS THE TIMESTREAM! USE YOUR COSMIC AWARENESS--
--AND YOU'LL KNOW I'M RIGHT!
IT--CAN'T--BE!
I'M SO CLOSE TO VICTORY! SOON I'D HAVE DISPLACED OBLIVION HIMSELF!
WHAT A UNIVERSE-- TO BE TRICKED BY SUCH A SMALL CONCEPT!
HE DISINTEGRATED, INFINITY! SINCE HE WAS UNWORTHY TO WIELD THE POWER OF THE QUANTUM-BANDS, IT TOOK GREAT CONCENTRATION TO KEEP THEM FROM CONSUMING HIM!
THE REALIZATION THAT I WAS THE SUPERIOR ANOMALY WAS ENOUGH TO DESTROY HIS CONCENTRATION, HIS CONFIDENCE, AND FINALLY HIS LIFE!
THE REACTION BETWEEN THE QUANTUM-FORCE AND THE KINETIC ENERGY HE ABSORBED IN CREATING THE BLACK HOLE WAS SO UNIMAGINABLY VOLATILE--
--IT HAS REVERSED THE DIRECTION OF THE FLOW OF MATTER AND ENERGY IN THE UNIVERSE!
YOU MEAN--?!?


UATU, DO MY SENSE ORGANS BETRAY ME--
--OR IS THERE SOMETHING WHITE AT THE CENTER OF THE BLACK HOLE?
"SOMETHING IS HAPPENING, EGMA! SOMETHING IS TURNING THE BLACK HOLE INSIDE OUT! IT'S BECOME A WHITE HOLE, SPEWING OUT ALL THE MASS THAT HAD BEEN SUCKED INTO IT!"
"THIS IS INEXPLICABLE! WHAT COULD BE RESPONSIBLE?"
"THERE MUST BE POWERS AT WORK HERE, FUNCTIONING ON A LEVEL BEYOND THAT WHICH CAN BE OBSERVED BY OUR KIND."
"THEN LET US GIVE THEM THANKS THAT THERE STILL EXISTS A COSMOS TO OBSERVE..."


OBLIVION, YOUR AVATAR HAS BEEN VANQUISHED BY MINE. YOUR SCHEME TO TILT THE UNIVERSE TOWARD THE DARK SIDE HAS FAILED.
IT WAS NOT MY SCHEME. IT WAS MY AVATAR'S.
BY AIDING AND EMPOWERING HIM, YOU HAVE VIOLATED THE TERMS OF OUR OLD AGREEMENT. WE MUST ESTABLISH NEW TERMS.
I SEE NO NEED. THE INFRACTION HAS BEEN CANCELED. THE OLD BALANCE IS SUFFICIENT.
EVER THE CONTENTIOUS ONE, AREN'T YOU? DO YOU NOT REALIZE THAT IF MY AVATAR AND I HAD NOT INTERVENED--
--IF MAELSTROM HAD SUCCEEDED IN COLLAPSING THE UNIVERSE INTO A SINGLE ANOMALOUS POINT, CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING BUT ONE SUPREME BEING--
--AS THE PERSONIFICATION OF ANOMALY, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN IT. HE WOULD HAVE SUPPLANTED YOU, OBLIVION--AND RECREATED YOU AS HIS SUBORDINATE.
BECAUSE YOUR AVARICE AND SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS PERMITTED MAELSTROM TO NEARLY USURP CONTROL OVER OUR COSMOGONY, I DEMAND A NEW PACT BETWEEN OUR POWERS BE STRUCK.
THAT I MIGHT BE SPARED FURTHER SANCTIMONIOUS POSTURING, LET US SUMMON OUR COUNTERPARTS AND BE ABOUT IT ALREADY!


DEATH HEEDS YOUR SUMMONS, MY BROTHER.
ETERNITY HEEDS YOUR SUMMONS, MY SISTER.
OH, MAN-- THAT SKELETAL BEING JUST STEPPED OUT OF OBLIVION, AND THAT STARRY GUY WITH THE ANTLERS JUST STEPPED OUT OF INFINITY!
WERE THEY THERE ALL ALONG... OR DID THEY JUST USE THEIR BODIES AS PORTALS?
I GET THE OVERWHELMING SENSATION THAT OF ALL THE ABSTRACT BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE, DEATH, OBLIVION, ETERNITY, AND INFINITY ARE THE FOUR HEAVIEST...
...THE FOUR POINTS OF THE COSMOLOGICAL COMPASS!
WOW! EVEN WITH MY COSMIC AWARENESS I CAN'T BEGIN TO DECIPHER A SYLLABLE OF WHAT THEY'RE SAYING TO ONE ANOTHER.
NO POINT HANGING AROUND HERE. I'M GOING TO USE THE INFINITY FORCE--BEFORE MY BENEFACTOR TAKES IT FROM ME--TO QUANTUM JUMP BACK TO EARTH...
...SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO FREE IT FROM MAELSTROM'S CLUTCHES...


THERE IT IS--ITS ROTATION SKILL SUSPENDED DUE TO MAELSTROM'S RINGS OF ANTI-KINESIS!
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN THIS WAY? I SENSE...THAT NO DIRE TIDAL, ATMOSPHERIC, OR TECTONIC CALAMITIES HAVE OCCURRED!
I MUST DISRUPT THE RINGS... RESTORE THE EARTH'S NATURAL MOTION.
YES...DR. STRANGE AND A CABAL OF SORCERERS HAVE MANAGED TO HOLD IN ABEYANCE ALL THE PLANET-WIDE SIDE EFFECTS.
BUT THEY ARE FALTERING. ANY MOMENT NOW, THEIR SPELL WILL BREAK.
ALTHOUGH THE QUANTUM BANDS HAVE NO CONTROL OVER KINETIC ENERGY PER SE, MAELSTROM AUGMENTED HIS PERSONAL POWERS WITH QUANTUM-ENERGY.
WERE I TO WITHDRAW THAT--YES! THE RINGS ARE DISSIPATING!
EARTH MOVES AGAIN!
NOW...TO REDUCE MY ENERGY FORM TO HUMAN PROPORTIONS...
...AND SEE WHAT HAS BECOME OF MY PHYSICAL BODY.

STROMBERG'S MANSION...

I LOOK *AWFUL*. THE QUESTION IS...WITH *INFINITY'S POWER* WITHIN ME, DO I HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BRING MY BODY *BACK TO LIFE?*

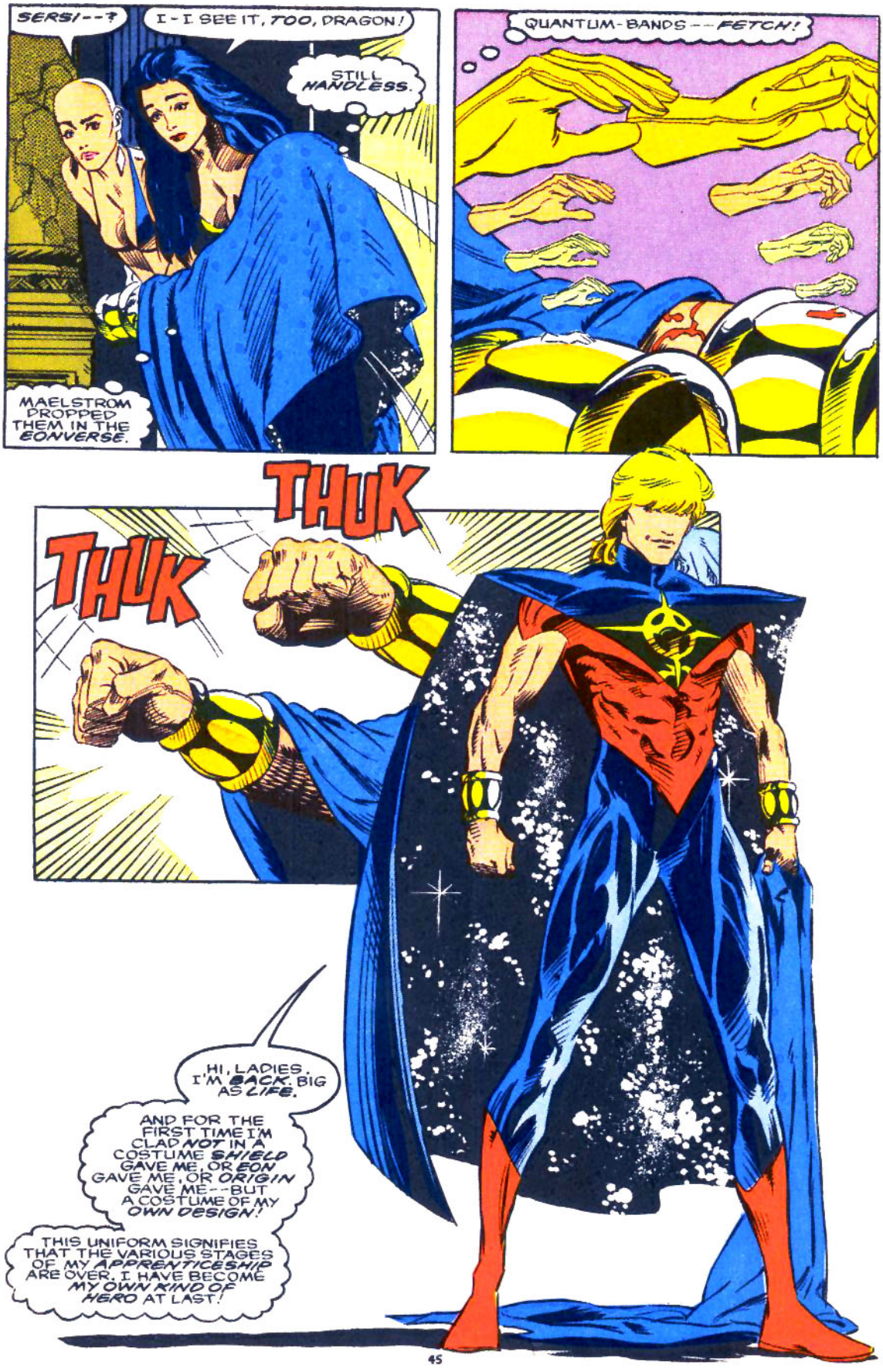
THAT *GLOW--!*

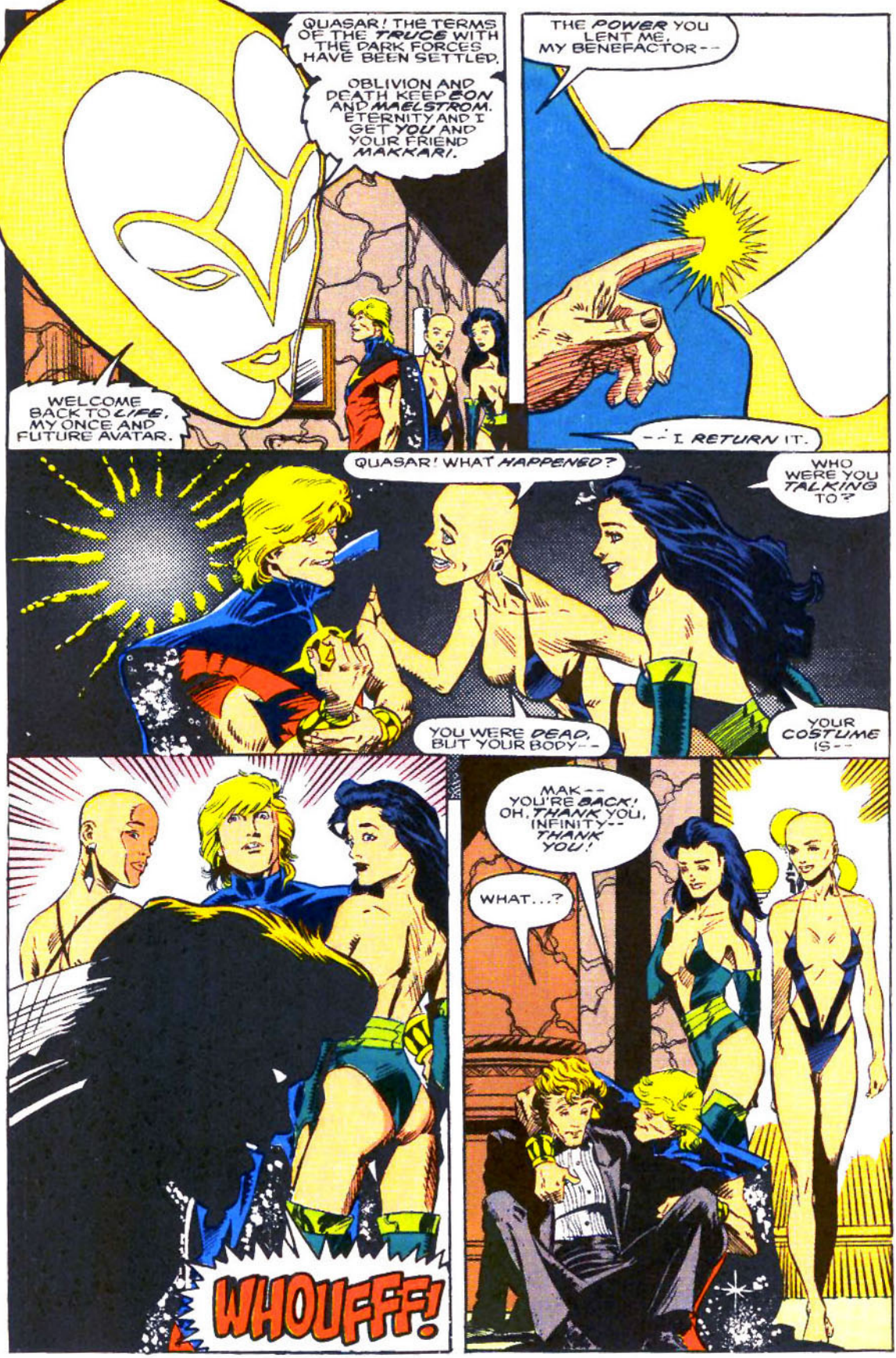
WHO--?

BE WITH YOU IN A MOMENT, LADIES--

--I HOPE.

HERE GOES *EVERYTHING!*


SERSI--?
I-I SEE IT, TOO, DRAGON!
STILL HANDLESS.
MAELSTROM DROPPED THEM IN THE EONVERSE.
QUANTUM-BANDS--FETCH!
THUK
THUK
HI, LADIES. I'M BACK. BIG AS LIFE.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME I'M GLAD NOT IN A COSTUME SHIELD GAVE ME, OR EON GAVE ME, OR ORIGIN GAVE ME--BUT A COSTUME OF MY OWN DESIGN!
THIS UNIFORM SIGNIFIES THAT THE VARIOUS STAGES OF MY APPRENTICESHIP ARE OVER. I HAVE BECOME MY OWN KIND OF HERO AT LAST!


QUASAR! THE TERMS OF THE TRUCE WITH THE DARK FORCES HAVE BEEN SETTLED.
OBLIVION AND DEATH KEEP ON AND MAELSTROM. ETERNITY AND I GET YOU AND YOUR FRIEND MAKKARI.
WELCOME BACK TO LIFE, MY ONCE AND FUTURE AVATAR.
THE POWER YOU LENT ME, MY BENEFACTOR--
--I RETURN IT.
QUASAR! WHAT HAPPENED?
WHO WERE YOU TALKING TO?
YOU WERE DEAD, BUT YOUR BODY--
YOUR COSTUME IS--
WHOUFFF!
MAK-- YOU'RE BACK! OH, THANK YOU, INFINITY-- THANK YOU!
WHAT...?

GREENWICH VILLAGE...

MOTHER EARTH AND ALL HER CHILDREN ARE ONCE MORE IN YOUR *DEBT*, STEPHEN.

BUT...WHAT *HAPPENED*? WHO *RESTORED* THE EARTH'S MOTION?

PERHAPS MY MOST WONDROUS *SON OF ALL*... THE MAN CALLED *QUASAR*.

AND IN THE VICINITY OF THE PLANET SATURN...

I HAVE *GLIMPSED* HER AT LAST. FOR A FEW FLEETING MOMENTS, I, *KRONOS* OF TITAN, GAZED UPON THE COUNTENANCE OF *INFINITY*...

...AND FELT THE *GRACE* OF ALL EXISTENCE SHINE UPON ME.

TRULY *LIFE*... IN *WHATEVER* FORM WE MANAGE TO ATTAIN IT...IS *BOUNDLESS* IN ITS *GOODNESS*.

THE END.